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THE LIFE OF
ANTONIO FOGAZZARO



THE LIFE OF ANTONIO FOGAZZARO

BY

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE

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W. Monach

THIS book was planned and nearly finished before the war. I have hesitated to publish it, because it belongs to another epoch—to a world from which we are separated by a tragic experience which has fundamentally altered our inner life and set us face to face with new problems, new passions, constraining us to a radical revision of our opinions and of all those spiritual values in accordance with which we had heretofore regulated our lives. While I was composing it the work was alive and real, because it dealt with unresolved spiritual conflicts, with unsolved problems, with affections and animosities that were still ardent. Suddenly the course of those traditions, of that life of which it formed a part, was shattered ; the thread of our undertakings was severed and, all unprepared, we were hurled against a gigantic and terrible calamity. To-day, in resuming our interrupted studies, we look back upon the men and the controversies of yesterday with a sort of melancholy perplexity, as though, left stranded upon another shore, they were withdrawn from us for all time, and already belonged to another century. It is not the few years that have elapsed that divide us from them, but rather the nature of the events that have transpired.

However, on reviewing this biography in the spirit of criticism—as is possible for one who views his work from a distance—I have reached the conclusion that, even should such readers as are impatient of retrospection discover, in certain passages, traces of mould and dust, the work nevertheless contains a human experience so rich as to render it worthy to soar above the frivolous curiosity of a public avid of those polemics that impassion for an hour or a day, and enter the calm sphere wherein dwells the student of those things that are of the soul.

It seems to me, moreover, that the book warrants publication

precisely at this moment when the tempest is dying down ; that it may serve as an invitation to certain spirits who long to withdraw from the tumult and revert to the inner life. Not only is it necessary that the workman return to the factory and the peasant to the fields, that the peaceful rhythm of manual labour be once more heard in town and country ; it is equally necessary that men rediscover the lost ways of that world of more intimate thought and affections, where burn the invisible fires that are the centre of action itself ; that they once more learn to delight in exploring those depths wherein our being has its roots and laws ; that they again set forth to conquer not only material well-being, but the eternal values as well. Failing such re-concentration in meditation, failing a more intense religious recollection, we shall risk beholding a generation, that is poor in the truest riches, lose itself in disordered activities ; we shall risk being obliged to participate in an era filled with noisy confusion, but void of souls.

This biography does indeed form an earnest invitation to revert to the things of the inner life, to that world of truth and beauty which exists not externally, but within us, and where such as live on the surface of things may not enter. The work will therefore prove incomprehensible to "moderates" of all classes. To such as advocate moderation in all things, to the man of common sense only, to the successful, to the indifferent who have found a way to dwell in peace with their flesh and are insensible to divine promptings—to all such it can but appear incomprehensible, irrational. But to those who live by a faith, be it even another faith ; to those, though they be adversaries, who esteem more highly than base indifference the travail and anxieties of a harassed conscience, it will not seem inopportune that, at a moment when materialistic preoccupations threaten to become all-engrossing, even among such believers as take but a feeble interest in the hereafter, the memory should be revived of one who—albeit amidst certain bewilderments—sought ever and alone the kingdom of the Spirit.

I have endeavoured to write the story of a man's soul.

Viewed from the outside as a simple succession of events and literary labours, Fogazzaro's life might indeed seem monotonous and devoid of episodes of entralling interest. It had as a back-

ground a grey and hazy epoch, and is consequently lacking in those strong contrasts that interest the public in general. But examined in the light of its laborious inner developments, of the intimate dualism existing between the spirit and the sense, between the spirit and the letter, it derives colour from obscure and self-contained dramatic elements of its own, and appears rich, as are but few lives, in passions and lofty mental travail, permeated as it was by all the idealistic currents of the times, and harassed by all the aspirations and dubiety of an era of religious and moral crises.

It would, however, have been impossible for me to undertake a similar form of spiritual biography without the rich, unpublished material which was placed at my disposal by the express desire of its subject himself. Only a few months before his death I was asked to write an essay on Fogazzaro, who persuaded me to decline the invitation, saying: "You are certainly the person best qualified to write of me after my death, when you will be in possession of all available material and perfectly free to use it as you wish. This is my express desire." (July 18, 1910.)

He could not then have foreseen in what manner I should become possessed of all those documents which most accurately reflect his inner life. In fact, a year later there came to me, as a legacy, a collection of letters addressed by Fogazzaro to a person with whom, in middle life, he had been in close communion of soul—a communion so continuous, so deep, so pure and so singular that these letters actually constitute an autobiographical confession. In my book I have called them "Letters to Elena," and had the original intentions of the correspondents been carried out they would have been consigned to the flames.

But she who possessed them, reading them again after many years, when, in anticipation of approaching death she was arranging for the disposal of her greatest treasures, experienced a sense of remorse that these letters must be destroyed in fulfilment of a promise given. She therefore besought her friend to save the previous correspondence for the good of other souls. And Antonio Fogazzaro consented, leaving his faithful friend free to dispose of the letters, and trusting to her discretion to prevent them and certain biographical notes from falling into the hands

of any frivolous person, vulgarly curious concerning the secrets of the dead. The documents were consigned to me that I might extract from them, with strict historical conscientiousness, all that, be it of good or of evil, may help to place the figure of Antonio Fogazzaro in its true light.

Almost at the same time Monsignor Geremia Bonomelli consigned to me his correspondence with Fogazzaro between the years 1893 and 1911. As the letters to Elena reflect the sentimental crisis, so do those to the bishop reflect the religious crisis.

To this central group of documents were added other less numerous but hardly less important letters, such as those addressed to Gaetano Negri, Arrigo Boito, Alfonso Capecelatro, Luigi Luzzatti, Giulio Salvadori, Alessandro Luzio, Filippo Meda, Filippo Crispolti, Federico von Hügel and many others whose names figure in the following pages, and to all of whom I wish to express my gratitude for the assistance they have rendered me. To complete these documents there are the many letters received from representative men of Fogazzaro's day, amongst whom I may mention Francesco de Sanctis, Alessandro d'Ancona, Giuseppe Giacosa, Giovanni Verga and Alfredo Loisy.

But while this mass of heretofore unknown and unpublished material may serve as a sure guide to a psychological analysis of the man, and throw a new light upon his literary work, that work itself must be re-examined in the light of a true and full confession of his spiritual life. In his works of fiction the art of Fogazzaro is so permeated with his own experiences that, aided by his letters, we shall always be able to recognize him therein as he really was in regard to the development in him of the sentiment of love, pain, faith and doubt. His works form a true and complete *poetical memoir*. In them he conceals his identity beneath various disguises, calls himself by various names—Silla, Daniele or Maironi—and applies Chateaubriand's method to the matter of his experiences : " *J'idealise les personnages réels, et personnifie, les songes, déplaçant la matière et l'intelligence.*"

But in these transpositions and transfigurations of reality, whereby the events of his life become poetry, there may always be discerned a faithful and not too closely veiled image of him who writes. His innate modesty and just sense of what

is fitting forbade in Fogazzaro the use of the presumptuous first person singular in telling the story of his soul. There is not one of his novels, however, but reflects a different moment and a different phase of one and the same hidden romance —his own : his works of fiction form a confession (and herein lies their enthralling originality) that begins with *Malombra* and ends thirty years later with *Leila*, in the course of which the poet tells of all that has been essential in his life, of what he has truly loved and suffered in secret, and reveals the nature of his attitude towards woman and towards God in all its intimacy.

With Fogazzaro the novel was never a book written exclusively for others ; first and foremost it was a book written for the good of his own soul and its solace, wherein he was wont to cast all of passion and of ardour that was in him, his most secret treasure that he jealously hid from the world. In Fogazzaro, art and life are but two flames of the same fire—a condition seldom met with in writers of contemporary literature. The luminosities and weaknesses of one are but the luminosities and weaknesses of the other ; the same blood flows in both ; they soar upon the same wings. In him life and art spring from a common centre and together strain towards a common goal ; and for this reason it would be impossible to place the man and the artist on two different planes and study them separately.

But from this comprehensive study of his life and works I believe that the figure of Antonio Fogazzaro will emerge more definitely defined and freed from many and dissimilar misapprehensions. If at times it may have appeared that certain attitudes of his were tinged with literary insincerity or had been suggested by external influences, this more searching examination of his spirit will establish the fact that both his acts and words were determined by the one dominant law of his conscience. The faiths he served, the theories he expounded, the ideas he professed were no empty scheme ; they were the very substance of his life itself, the fruits of his researches, of his sufferings, of the travail of one who delves within himself. In this light the least clearly defined lines in his psychology become definite. Those traits that on a superficial examination may seem most weak and timid in him are but waverings in appearance, that have their roots in

the depths and strength of his convictions. His very mysticism is not what some of his critics have esteemed it—a vague and nebulous poetry or the affected pose of the man of letters. It is the tragedy of one in search of God. It is impossible to confound the religious dilettantism of a decadent century with his active faith, ill-defined idealisms with his Christian realism focused in one mighty effort of all his thoughts and actions for the saving of his soul. What to us may appear doubtful, imperfect or contradictory in his mind may be severely criticized but never condemned, because at the bottom even of his errors and hesitations there shines the light of sincerity and goodness that redeems.

I have endeavoured, therefore, to grasp and explain everything, and to hide nothing. There was no stain upon him for which he need blush before his fellow-men. But I should have minimized the significance and the true worth of his personality had I, out of a mistaken respect for his memory, concealed the shadows and contrasts, arbitrarily interpreted them according to my own intention, or even, by an intentional omission, drawn a false portrait of him. I have sought to write a history, and not a eulogy. Antonio Fogazzaro would have been the first to rebel fiercely against posthumous panegyries. He was far too humble in the light of truth not to realize how much there might be that was weak and imperfect in his life and work ; he possessed too lofty and austere a sense of immortal beauty to look upon his achievements as idols to be worshipped, forgetting that they are of clay. In him the vast Christian sadness was too acute—the sadness that tinges all success with the sense of the heart's radical dissatisfaction, and in every ascension marks the distance between goal and limit—to lull his soul in that comfortable self-complacency that demands and expects most servile praise.

He would have asked of his biographer only justice and understanding, and therefore I have stood unafraid before him, in my determination to discover the marks of his truest greatness, which greatness is often only faintly outlined in a man's life and works, but may be incorporated in the spiritual heritage of a century—the flashings of his genius, the seeds he had sown.

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CHAPTER I

EARLY DAYS

“THE Fogazzaros of old were mountaineers, and the love of the hills is in my blood.”¹ So the poet once wrote in an autobiographical sketch, and with all the pride with which another might have traced his lineage back to the crusaders. He loved his humble origin, and probably delighted in the thought that throughout a period stretching not too far back into the reaches of time, his ancestors, in the pastoral seclusion of their lives, had silently accumulated those pure treasures of poetry which formed his own richest heritage; that in him spoke the voice of a strong and rugged race which for centuries had laboured humbly in remote regions and lived in close communion with mother earth. Every family from which there springs a flower has its roots, and Antonio Fogazzaro felt the roots of his embedded in the very rock of the mountains that encircle Vicenza, whence, not until the eighteenth century, did his forbears descend in search of better fortune, bringing with them their one treasure—

“ an honest name,
Cherishing it in their hearts as had it been some priceless gem,
Entrusted to their keeping by their best beloved . . .”

upon which name, by virtue of “a gift divine,” he, Antonio, was destined to shed the light of fame.²

The first of his house whose name is still remembered was a certain Abramo (Abraham), father of Giovanni Antonio, and grandfather of the first Mariano. Giovanni Antonio began the work of improving the family’s very humble circumstances. His son Mariano laid the foundations for its future prosperity. He

¹ These unpublished autobiographical notes, which tell the story of his life down to the *Malombra* period, were written by Fogazzaro for a friend, who has been authorized to make use of them.

² From an unpublished fragment of *In Memoria*.

became a wool merchant, beginning his career in 1776, at the early age of twelve. Old Giovanni was generous to the point of prodigality, and his son kept him short of money in consequence. To evade Mariano's vigilance he was even known to fling clothing and household linen out of the window to beggars assembled below. His son, who had built up the family fortunes, one day appeared before him decked out in a red satin coat lined with white and ornamented with paste-encrusted buttons which had just arrived from Paris, whereupon the open-handed old man, who, however, hated extravagance, became furiously angry, and ordered him to divest himself of the garment without delay. This Mariano had a son named Giovanni Antonio, who was the father of another Mariano, and the grandfather of Antonio.¹ He was born at Schio on February 24, 1784, and married for his first wife one Innocentina Mazzi of Bergamo, who died young after bearing him ten children. He contracted a second marriage with the Countess Isabella Spaur of Trent, by whom he had six more children, and finally died at Vicenza in 1856.

Antonio Fogazzaro often spoke of his paternal grandfather as singularly typical of the men of other days, as both dictatorial and eccentric ; and he would recall how, in his childhood, he had trembled before him even as his own children had done. In the silent, cheerless homestead at Carpagnon, with its damp court-yard, presided over by a statue in the barocco style, the frowning, domineering, irascible old man, reigning like some petty monarch to whose will all must yield as in obedience to a representative of legitimate authority, personified the reactionary spirit of the Europe of the past.

An episode of which Giacomo Zanella was a witness, vividly illustrates the mental attitude maintained by the old man, in his bitter opposition to the new spirit that was seeking to invade even that dark and joyless Vicentine home, one of the last strong-holds of an era of narrow despotism. "One day, during dinner, in the year '31," Fogazzaro tells us,² "the conversation turned upon Poland. Pasini and several other Liberals were present,

¹ This information is derived in part from a certain "grey copybook" containing *Family and Literary Memories and Episodes*, which Fogazzaro collected between the years 1881 and 1883.

² *Family Memories and Episodes*.

and they spoke of the revolution in terms of enthusiasm. My grandfather made no comment until my aunt Nina, a girl of ardent temperament and many ideals, uttered some words of sympathy for the insurgents. Hereupon my grandfather rose in his wrath, planted his fists firmly upon the table, and shouting: 'I will not tolerate such sentiments in any daughter of mine!' ordered her from the room." Such was the mental attitude of Giovanni Antonio.

No one of the children he had by Innocentina Mazzi resembled him, however. We shall see later on how splendid was the spirit, open to all righteous love of liberty, of country and of beauty, by which both Don Giuseppe and Suor Maria Innocente were animated. But the contrast that must interest us most especially is that between the old man and his son Mariano.

Mariano was possessed of an ardent soul and an ardent faith; he was born both a believer and a poet; his religious fervour coloured his whole existence, and he was endowed with an exquisite appreciation of nature and of art. His spirit was dominated by two unbounded affections—God and Italy. In speaking of the Almighty his language was ever that of the panegyrist. The very fervour of his Catholic faith excluded all subtleties, all doubt. But his religion was not of the sort that fears liberty. Liberty he loved, looking upon it as a divine gift, for, paternal precautions notwithstanding, he had inhaled deep breaths of its aura. His country he served faithfully, loving her and toiling for her in all humility and without thought of recompense.

When the Revolution of 1848 broke out he was among the first to assume the twofold duties of citizen and soldier, in his city's defence. Appointed a member of Vicenza's municipal body and later of the temporary government set up during the siege, he, with his brother, Don Giuseppe, was dispatched on a mission to General Durando at Ferrara for the purpose of soliciting his immediate intervention on the city's behalf. After the events of '59 he was forced to live in exile in Turin, but in the autumn of 1866 we find him conveying Vicenza's declaration of adhesion to the Sardinian Monarchy into Lombardy, and at Peschiera owing a narrow escape from capture and the condemnation for high treason that would have been its inevitable

result, to his manly bearing and cool presence of mind alone. Immediately after the liberation of Venetia he was returned to Parliament as representative of the borough of Marostica, and re-elected in 1870 ; but, too proud and retiring to seek and obtain the favours of constituents and electioneering agents, when the general elections took place in 1874 he was set aside, and ignored by official Italy—by Italy to whom he had given his all, asking nothing in return.

Mariano Fogazzaro might indeed have left lasting traces of himself in many branches of learning. Besides a broad knowledge of art, literature, botany and agriculture, he was well versed in the science of medicine which might well have become the vocation of one so richly endowed with the power of acute observation. But he lacked that self-confidence necessary to excel in any one of these branches. His true value was appreciated only by men of superior understanding ; by such men as Gino Capponi, who cherished a deep affection for him, by Lammarmora, Minghetti, Peruzzi and Ricasoli.

Such a temperament old Giovanni Antonio would naturally find it difficult to understand, and the paternal lack of comprehension was destined soon to become open antagonism on the occasion of Mariano's marriage to Teresa Barrera, an alliance to which his father objected. The contest that ensued is vividly set forth in a couple of letters, which are deserving of attention if only for the insight they afford of the conditions and surroundings amongst which Antonio was born.

" In a moment of firm resolution," so Mariano wrote to his brother, Don Giuseppe, on July 15, 1837, " in a moment of shame for being ashamed, I come to open my heart to you. Should I fail to seize this opportunity, God alone knows when I would again be in a mood to speak. But why should I have hesitated thus to reveal to my truest friend the most jealously cherished, the most precious of my heart's secrets ? Believe me it was for no lack of confidence in you, but rather because of timidity on my part, and of that sense of embarrassment all must experience in divulging a sentiment so deeply hidden, and known only to themselves. I am in love, then—most ardently in love with a good woman. You know her and will therefore understand how inadequate any praise from me must prove. I love, and my love

is requited. But can it be right that two devout Christians whose souls could but profit by their union, whose one purpose is to walk in the paths of duty and virtue, should be condemned to love in vain ? This doubt, this scruple has urged me to appeal to one who, by a single word, can render us supremely happy or utterly miserable ; and it has furthermore persuaded us to disregard the formidable obstacles that I have reason to fear will be placed in our way by my father, who will look upon a marriage in our family (which is already so numerous) under present conditions, which he declares to be critical, as an utterly impossible proposition."

Nor was Mariano mistaken as regards the storm he would have to face on revealing his intentions, and a few days later we find him writing again, as follows :

" . . . we have made our intentions known to Papa, Signor Lenzi acting as intermediary. I will not attempt to describe the passion into which he flew on hearing the news (which upsets all his plans), especially as he found that my mother, Don Giuseppe, Lina, P. Biagio and nearly every one of the numerous persons he appealed to, were on my side. Instead of influencing him in my favour, however, this unanimous approval has but served to strengthen him in his own determination, and he has not hesitated to threaten and resort to every imaginable means to turn me from my purpose. But my troth is plighted to Teresa Barrera, and our determination is too strong to be shaken by the arguments he puts forward, which are but the outcome of his own resolve to marry me, when and how it may best suit him, to riches and noble birth. These are mercenary considerations which should never be allowed to weigh against a well-placed affection, the only solid guarantee for married happiness.

" Finally, a couple of days ago, my father proposed a compromise which would hardly be justifiable were I the worst of rakes and Teresa a girl of evil repute. I might marry her, he said, but he would not only disinherit me and reduce me to poverty, but also, as a warning to my brothers and sisters, refuse to recognize me as his son ; and he added that should I put forward any legal claim to maintenance by him, I should have to get it enforced by the courts of justice."

In vain did those whose opinions he should have respected seek to calm the wrath of this obdurate old man, who looked

upon his son merely as an instrument to be used in furthering his own ambitious purposes for promoting the family's rapidly increasing prosperity.

But Mariano had given his whole heart, and his conscience was at rest. Even financial difficulties failed to daunt him, and he was probably fully convinced that Providence, in whom he placed his trust, would not fail to help one who was setting out to face the future with such firm confidence. As in all good, old-fashioned stories, Providence did indeed presently intervene on behalf of the lovers, by means of the generosity of Pietro Barrera ("Uncle Piero" of *The Patriot*), who, in order that they might realize their dream of happiness, which would hardly have been possible on the meagre allowance old Giovanni Antonio had at last reluctantly consented to grant them, and that his sister's domestic felicity might be untroubled by cares of a sordid nature, bestowed upon the young couple the income from a few thousand *lire*, that was all he possessed beside the small pension he drew in his capacity as architect. / In thus following a generous impulse this most modest and upright of men could certainly have had no inkling that a lasting monument would one day be erected to his memory, a monument wrought neither of bronze nor of marble, but one no less imperishable. / For of that noble and much antagonized union, which Pietro Barrera had sacrificed his little all to render possible, Antonio Fogazzaro was destined to be the fruit. /

/ He first saw the light in Vicenza on March 25, 1842. It was Good Friday, which fact his aunt, *Suor* (Sister) Maria Innocente, interpreted as a good omen, / and, writing from her convent at Alzano, said: "Is it not probable that he will develop a greater sanctity than any of us? Let us hope so." Of his early childhood Antonio Fogazzaro himself has left some memories in his autobiographical notes:¹

"The earliest event of my childhood that I remember," he tells us, "had to do with a sin of gluttony which I committed at the tender age of two and a half, when I gorged myself on (sweets) *confetti*. I can still see myself huddled in a corner behind a sofa, trembling lest I be discovered. Punishment followed in the form of a serious illness, but that I do not remember.

¹ Unpublished autobiographical notes.

“ It is said that I was able to read before I was three, and that I belonged to that odious species, the *enfant prodige*. As a matter of fact I was a quiet, thoughtful child, always avid of books. My father and mother taught me with great care. I was both sensitive and reticent. If I felt I had been subjected to unjust treatment . . . I would brood over the thought in painful silence ; it was something in the nature of a pleasure to me to fancy I was not beloved, that I was persecuted in every way. This idea that I was the object of persecution followed me for some time. My sister had better and more pleasing manners than I. It often happened that I would thoughtlessly snatch the largest fruit from a dish. This never happened to my sister. At such times I would naturally be scolded and accused of selfishness. I never defended myself, but, being well aware that I was not really more greedy than she, but only more thoughtless, I resented the reproof as unjust, at the same time tacitly revelling in a sense of bitter satisfaction. This peculiarity has clung to me.”¹

/ When about six this singularly precocious child felt the first breath of an unfamiliar emotion ; his first infatuation was for a certain Signorina Felicita N.,/as he himself would sometimes smilingly relate. “ Her home was in Turin, but she used to spend the holidays in Valsolda. She was ten years my senior, tall, slim and dark . . . and both sensible and witty. I used to go about writing her name here and there. I remember my mother once found me thus employed, and said : ‘ You have left out the accent on the *a*.’ I blushed furiously and sheepishly, hiding the writing by pressing my nose against it, replied : ‘ No, no ! It has no accent.’ I also recall how I once thrilled with emotion when in close proximity to Felicita.”²

/ Almost simultaneously with his first consciousness of woman there awoke in him the consciousness of nature, to whose appeal he responded with a sense of mystical emotion./ On one occasion, having accompanied his father on a visit to some friends in the country, they took him to the top of a hill that was crowned by an old tower. The view from this hill top impressed him as so beautiful that he fell upon his knees in admiration.

¹ These autobiographical notes are of use in part only owing to their fragmentary nature. Where they fail me I am guided by private correspondence.

² Unpublished autobiographical notes.

Endowed with a sensibility so exquisite, the scenery of his own Valsolda, in its every line and ever-changing aspect, soon became to him as a thing of life, as the face of a friend, now smiling, now overshadowed by grief.

/ For every poet there is a region that is the true home of his soul ;/ a spot that is as the nest wherein his inspiration rested before its wings bore it aloft.

/ In Antonio Fogazzaro's case the spot that made him a poet was Valsolda, his mother's birthplace. /

It was from the windows of the house at Oria, the house that clings to the hillside and leans out over the lake, with its little garden fragrant with the breath of mandarine blossoms and *olea fragrans*, and its cypresses soaring heavenwards, solitary and austere, that the child first began to study the landscape of Lombardy, whose grave and occult beauty may well serve as guide to the understanding of an art that reveals itself little by little to him who has begun to worship it.

Meanwhile the religious spirit had been aroused within him —that religion of the home which, if it is to bear fruit, must be neither the mere habitual performance of certain rites and the repetition of certain formulæ, nor an abstract truth stripped of every element of sentiment and beauty, which must be neither a superstition nor a philosophy, but the very life that is lived in the home, the age-old tradition surrounding a faith that has been guarded as jealously as the sacred fire itself ; such a religion, indeed, had its altars in the home into which Antonio Fogazzaro was born, forming at once the poetry and the law by which the actions of all were ruled alike in joy and sorrow. The devout Catholic spirit that reigned in this household consisted not merely in the observance of the rites and precepts of the Church, but sought expression in the unremitting practice and application of the teachings of Scripture. Consequently the earliest religious instruction the child Antonio received took the form not of dogmatic formulæ, but of the living example that, from the first, set Christianity before him as the religion of kindness and love. The first word the faith of his fathers spoke to him was that at once most human and most divine that teaches us to love a Father who is in Heaven through our brothers who are on earth.

" *Toniuccio* mine,"¹ his Uncle Giuseppe wrote to him in a letter teeming with tender affection which clearly reveals the spirit of the earliest religious instruction imparted to the child, " this is probably the last letter I shall send you for a long time, for presently you will be telling me everything by word of mouth ; and I assure you that, although I am sorry you must leave the Lake and the hills you have learned to love and around which cluster so many pleasant memories, I am nevertheless very glad to have near me once more a small person like yourself, who loves me as you assure me you do. How many happenings both of the long, long ago and of recent date we shall have to recall together, and I trust we shall both learn many lessons from them. If in nothing else I shall hope to succeed in teaching you to be guided in all your actions first by the love of God, and secondly by the love of humanity. You must learn how to love God by loving man, who is His own, and dearly beloved by Him. Had God not loved us, He would not have given us this life of ours which we owe to His affection. Therefore, in every human being we should discern an image of God, a son of the Father of all, who is in Heaven, and a brother of the God made man, Jesus, Son of the Father and one with Him. You are growing quite a big boy, *Toniuccio* mine, and you must strive to make your soul keep pace with your body. As the body grows by means of food, so the soul grows by believing and loving, by believing and loving what God has taught us to believe and love. Now this believing is called Faith, and this loving is called Grace, and the soul expands and grows strong through Faith and Grace by which it is nourished. A true knowledge of these things is acquired not so much by study as by prayer and the performance of good deeds, which may cost us much or little, as the case may be, but which must always cost us something else there would be no virtue in performing them ; but herein God will always help us, for without His aid in none of our undertakings could we possibly succeed. I could go on discoursing of these matters indefinitely, but I will stop now, for soon—God willing—we shall be able to talk of them freely together. . . ."

With such wisdom and lucidity were the Gospel truths translated into simple language which touched the child's heart even before his intellect was prepared to grasp them. Theology, as presented to him by " *lo Zione* " (the big Uncle), was a sweet

¹ Diminutive of Antonio = *Toni* = *Toniuccio*. (Translator's Note.)

and simple matter. The laws of God did not loom before him as commands inscribed upon cold tablets of stone, but rather did he see them enshrined in the hearts of his nearest and dearest.

Antonio Fogazzaro received his first lessons in patriotism from his father, and from his uncle the priest, during a memorable period in the year 1848. In those March days the marble city of Palladio was enveloped in an atmosphere of glory and heroism. The smell of powder and of blood was in the air. How intensely the child shared his country's hopes and anguish may be adduced from the letters his father and Don Giuseppe wrote during the fatal month of May, some of which were addressed directly to Antonio, who, with his mother and little sister Ina, had been sent to Rovigo while Vicenza prepared for a final, desperate attempt at defence.

"**MY DEAREST LITTLE SOLDIER,**" Uncle Giuseppe wrote,¹ "the reports you have heard concerning Pius IX., which have also been circulating here, vexed me also not a little at first, but now that I have had time to reflect dispassionately, I feel sure there is no truth in them. It is too clearly apparent that Pius IX. is under the Lord's guidance for us to doubt him or question the justice of any act for which he is responsible. Meanwhile do you pray, and let us all pray, that God may continue to bless us, and let each one of us earnestly seek to deserve such blessing by doing what is right, and holding himself in readiness to answer the call of duty."

It is evident from the contents of this letter that Antonio Fogazzaro was keenly alive to certain events which were transpiring in Italy, and that his heart was overflowing with a precocious sense of indignation and disappointment which he had confided to Don Giuseppe. He longed to be in Vicenza where his father was fighting, and, seated at his mother's knee, he eagerly drank from her lips the contents of letters now hopeful, now despairing, but always containing at least a few words addressed directly to the fiery "little soldier."

Yellowed by age, but still vibrant with the thrill of those epic days, these letters yet enable us to realize, even at this distance of time, the strength of the impressions which, on the

¹ Vicenza, May 9, 1848.

threshold of adolescence, fired the spirit of the future author of *The Patriot*.

Later a letter from Mariano brought news of impending danger:

"We are still very hopeful," he wrote, "but with each passing hour we become less so, for we have not heard from our correspondent, who had orders to send us news by special courier as soon as our side was sure of victory. Still, it is true that no news either good or bad has reached us. Durando has sent to ask Carlo Alberto for 5000 men to reinforce his troops. They are to come by way of Ostiglia, Rovigo and Padua. Whether the General's request will be complied with and the contingent arrive in time to prevent Nugent and Radetzki from joining forces, I cannot say. We can only hope for the best. . . ." Then, probably remembering that the children would be listening to his letter, he adds, addressing them directly: "For my part, I promise you that I shall do my best to kill as many of them as possible. I will shoot from the window, the barricades, or whencesoever I may happen to be stationed, for now I am but a simple soldier of the reserve. I hope you may never have cause to blush for your father; and when the war is over how many thrilling episodes we shall have to discuss together! Ina will have to pay close attention and remember everything in order to be able to relate it all to her children's children when she is an old grandmother, *toothless* perhaps, but certainly not *tongueless*!"¹

Every day the news grew less encouraging. Mariano's gloomy forebodings, however, were intermingled with more comforting passages, such as his description of the defence the Vicentine and Papal forces opposed to the Austrians of May 20:

"A large body of citizens hastened to the scene of the struggle and fought side by side with the Papal troops. The inhabitants of Borgo di Porta Padova fired from the windows, and held the enemy in check by their own unaided efforts. A great many armed citizens assembled in the Piazza and held themselves in readiness to rush to any point where danger threatened. The roofs of the houses were crowded with women who appeared to be entirely fearless, and as the shells flew past, both women and children shouted and clapped their hands. I assure you

¹ Letter to Teresa Fogazzaro, May 13, 1848.

that on Sunday morning we were all eager for the attack to begin, so sure were we that we should be able to defeat it; and when it became known that the Austrians had given up the idea of attacking Vicenza, instead of rejoicing, we were as disappointed as if we had missed something to which we had long been looking forward."

But even before he reached the end of his letter his wish was granted, for news arrived from Montebello that the Austrians, who had camped for the night at San Bonifazio, had received orders to retrace their steps without delay and seize Vicenza. It was even reported that they were already on the march. "Never fear," so the letter ends, "the victory will be ours! Good-bye, good-bye! I can hardly wait to hear the first roar of the cannon!"¹

Once more, indeed, the enemy assailed the heroic city, and once more Vicenza withstood the onslaught. Victorious now, even should she soon be forced to yield, with stubborn determination she prepared for the final struggle.

Cruel fate, however, had decreed that the painful efforts of those days of waiting should prove of no avail. On June 1, Mariano dispatched his last letter before the final defeat:

"... Pray to God that Peschiera may be taken! As soon as the volunteers come in from the Venetian provinces, it surely will. Last night, in the course of conversation, one of those present declared that Massimo d'Azeglio himself had said so. He (d'Azeglio) shuffled a bit, but could not deny it. Then pray that Peschiera may be taken and the 8000 Neapolitans be able to get through. Durando would then occupy Montebello—at least so the person mentioned above declared; but whether this be true or not I cannot say. And then I should be able to bring my dear ones home."²

When this letter was dispatched Mariano was still unaware that Peschiera had indeed been taken. For a brief moment on May 30, Victory had spread her wings above Carlo Alberto's army on the banks of Virgil's green and limpid stream. The King had defeated Radetzki at Goito, while on the extreme left Peschiera had surrendered. But the rapidity of the enemy's subsequent manœuvres rendered the victory of no avail, for

¹ Letter to Teresa Fogazzaro, May 23, 1848.

² *Ibid.*, June 1, 1848.

while the King's indecision delayed further operations, Radetzki quickly decided to lead his retreating army against Vicenza, and on May 10 the heroic city was assailed with overpowering violence, and once more became the slave of Austria, her desperate efforts to defend her liberty notwithstanding.

When Antonio Fogazzaro again saw his father he read in his face all the despair of the soldier who has fought in vain, and it was in a land no longer free that they embraced. The months of anxiety through which he had passed and the new state of bondage that encompassed him, were destined to influence in a marked degree the nature and development of the child's sentiments. At an age when he should have been revelling in fairy tales and fables, his imagination had been fired by deeds of heroism, and his father's descriptions combined with all the suggestiveness of things actually witnessed and experienced, had awakened in him a true understanding of the poetry of patriotism.

At the age of eight, thanks to his father's careful tutoring, Antonio Fogazzaro passed a successful examination and graduated from the preparatory school. He was now ready to enter upon a course of classical studies, upon which he brought to bear an intellect that was a blending of the positive and poetic. He was very fond of mathematics and possessed a wonderful memory for figures, while at the same time certain forms of poetry had the power of rousing him to the highest pitch of enthusiasm.

"I never exerted myself overmuch in the study of the subjects appertaining to the regular course," he tells us in his biographical notes. "As a child I read all sorts of amusing books, but I was by no means fond of serious study. I read badly—always hastily, and in a desultory manner. I was immensely fond of French, and by the time I was twelve, could think in that language. My favourite book was *Memoirs d'Outre Tombe* by Chateaubriand. I was infatuated with this author, and cherished a fantastic passion for his Lucile, as later on I worshipped one of Scott's heroines, Diana Vernon."

It fell to his uncle, Don Giuseppe, to regulate this first tumultuous confusion of impressions and curiosities, and throughout his years at the *ginnasio* Don Giuseppe was his guide.

The glowing terms in which Fogazzaro has described him in *The Man of the World* (Piccolo Mondo Moderno) and again in a short essay entitled *My First Teacher*, suffice to convey an idea of the influence he exercised over his nephew; and he was indeed worthy of the supremacy he possessed, for he was a shining example of a type of churchman produced by the Italian Risorgimento, which unhesitatingly recognized the possibility of a mingling of the spirit of holiness with the courage of the hero. In his native town his name is still revered, and he is numbered among those who were most determined in their efforts to rid their country of the foreign yoke.

On March 22, 1848, news reached Vicenza that Venice had recovered her freedom, and Manin wrote in secret to Valentino Pasini to inquire what course his fellow townsmen proposed to pursue, and what were their most pressing needs. Pasini replied that about fifteen hundred rifles were needed wherewith to arm the citizens. Word soon came from Venice that the rifles were available, but the difficulty was to get them conveyed to Vicenza, Malghera being still occupied by the enemy. At this juncture Don Giuseppe Fogazzaro and Giuseppe Mosconi came forward and offered their services in the dangerous undertaking.¹

When the Austrians had finally concentrated at Verona, Don Giuseppe Fogazzaro was dispatched on a secret mission to Bologna and Ferrara, where the Papal forces were assembled, for the purpose of persuading Durando to cross the river Po.

But amidst all the vicissitudes and manifold activities of public life he maintained ever the composure of the man of prayer and meditation, whose peaceful cell is within him, wherein is silence even amidst the tumult of battle. For the sentiment by which he was dominated was that of religion, and his spirit, sustained by the purest Christian philosophy, was disciplined to the strictest asceticism.

It was undoubtedly this teacher who most powerfully influenced the budding poet. /

¹ Sebastiano Rumor, *Don Giuseppe Fogazzaro. His Life and Times.* Vicenza, 1902.

At about this time also the boy began to be conscious of the existence of another deeply religious being, looming dimly in the very aura of the priest, and linked to him by ties both of the spirit and of blood ; a being who seemed the very personification of the contemplative life. This was Suor Maria Innocente, his father's sister, who was a nun of the order of Dom Bosco, and resided in the convent of Alzano near Bergamo. /

“ Dear Aunt Nina,” Fogazzaro wrote of her in affectionate reminiscence, “ Deep in my heart there will ever dwell the image of this gentle nun, passing, white and uncontaminated, through the world’s soot-laden atmosphere ; a woman with shining eyes who, despite her virginal purity, had yet retained all the fire of an ardent nature. Every year we paid two short visits to Bergamo—one in September and another in November, going thence to see my aunt. The convent was at a distance of some three miles from the city. I was passionately fond of my aunt, and I can still see that courtyard, that parlour and that face, whiter than the linen bands that encircled it. Aunt Nina was said to be far cleverer than any of her brothers and sisters. She and Don Giuseppe were united by the strongest ties of mutual respect and affection. Her impulsive nature and liberal views had somewhat estranged her from her father, who was intensely religious and austere. One of her shoulders was slightly mis-shapen, and she had taken it into her head that, on this account, no one could ever love her. Her eyes and play of feature were a study when, in the course of one of our visits she would question us concerning political events, and ask what hope there was of independence for Italy. She would speak in an undertone in order that the listening sister might not hear her. The ardent patriotism that burned within her, notwithstanding her life in the convent, was that of a saint. She was never heard to complain, and as a teacher she was indefatigable.”¹

To complete this sketch, drawn by a loving hand, we have Suor Maria Innocente’s correspondence with her brother from which we may judge of the influence the humble nun was capable of wielding from her cloistered retreat. All the hidden sublimity of the rare spirit by which this woman was animated is revealed in these pages. Whereas in Don Giuseppe the spirit of mysticism

¹ Unpublished autobiographical notes.

was restrained and disciplined by a life of action and continuous study, in Suor Maria Innocente it burned unchecked, as a flame in the desert. She had much in common with Teresa d'Avila and Catherine of Siena. Her letters contain outbursts of grief and of love that are as an echo of past ages. Like those saints, she knew the anguish of long hours of icy darkness following upon brief moments of light. "I feel that God is withdrawing Himself from me," she would write during such periods of spiritual darkness; "for only my senses are keenly alive, and all my acts are dominated by their horrible sway." At such times this soul from which faith had fled, would pour out its anguish in such tragic accents as the following: "The tide of doubt has risen and is overwhelming me . . . hope is dead within me . . . I can never tell you how dark my solitude is!"

But the hour of trial would pass away and again, with profound emotion and steadfast faith, her soul would awake to a sense of God's presence and works, again exult in the contemplation of all the goodness and beauty that are revealed to him who looks out upon the world with the eyes of faith. When, after the long winter spent patiently in her icy cell, where she was often held a prisoner by one or other of the many infirmities with which she was afflicted, the first breath of spring would be wafted through her casement, and her eyes behold the first bare branch begin to deck itself with tender green, she would call aloud to her confidant: "Let us enjoy to the utmost this delicious prelude to the spring which it has pleased God to send us! Let us forget for a time man's rebellious strivings and eternal unrest, and bask in nature's sweet smile. . . ." Thus keenly was she conscious of the presence of God in nature. But she felt His presence as well in the events of history; and when, instead of the soft breath of spring, an echo of important political happenings reached her narrow cell, an echo of the storm that was beating upon the tottering defences of the temporal power and gradually forcing the Church to relinquish it, the nun, in her mysticism, could perceive the will of God even in this sequence of events that filled more timid natures with dread; could see the hand of the Liberator, of the re-Creator, using its very enemies to infuse new life into the religious world. "How I rejoice," she

wrote to her brother in 1861, "at the welcome news that you are beginning to see the dawn of that dazzling reform in which, deep down in my heart, I have always firmly believed in spite of all attempts to persuade me to denounce it. I am well aware of my own blindness, and that it is my duty to subject my judgment to the judgment of those in authority over me, and I have therefore striven to stifle my own opinions by refraining from exercising my powers of ratiocination, but no one can take from me my perfect trust in the ineffable love of our merciful Lord Jesus for the children of His Immortal Spouse, our Holy Mother Church. Therefore, I say, let us bless and praise our sweet Lord, who would free His Beloved of her crutches that she may the better follow Him, soaring upon those pinions with which the Divine Spirit has endowed her."

It seems to me that in these and other pages written in tears and in blood by a woman whom renunciation could but exalt, whose chastity but rendered her more impassioned, in whom sorrow but engendered a greater tenderness, there is a forecast of the spirit with which her nephew's literary works would one day be imbued. Perhaps the germs of spirituality were indeed transmitted from soul to soul, for it is an undisputable fact that the influence exerted over him by Don Giuseppe and Suor Maria Innocente—the two lofty spirits encountered on the very threshold of the Church of his fathers—was the main factor in Antonio Fogazzaro's initiation into the mysteries of the Catholic life.

CHAPTER II

YOUTH

At the age of fourteen Antonio Fogazzaro entered the *Liceo*, and was thus separated from his dearest master. But another ecclesiastic was at hand, one no less distinguished for his talents than for his virtues, by whom the young man's intellectual development was destined to be markedly influenced. This was Giacomo Zanella.

At that time the author of *La Conchiglia Fossile* had not yet achieved renown. He was passing through a period of research and emancipation, whence he would issue with new conceptions both of thought and art. His gentle spirit, strongly reminiscent of Virgil, which heretofore had been nurtured exclusively upon evangelical sanctity and classic beauty, and held in check by a rigid discipline of all the sentiments, which had known no other emotion than that which had moved the young student to tears over a passage in the *Aeneid* in his seminary days, or fired him with enthusiasm for the heroic as depicted by Livy, was now for the first time looking forth upon that strange and glorious world of modern art and science which was destined to determine the tenor of the poet's later works. At this time of intellectual regeneration his power of influencing by suggestion one coming to him as his disciple, must have been especially strong.

Zanella sought by means of unconstrained conversations rather than by the monotonous routine of lectures to complete and illumine the regular course of study at the public school, where Antonio Fogazzaro had already begun to distinguish himself. His pupil tells us that when thus conversing with the students the master appeared to him "a veritable magician, who held imprisoned the spirits of all the great writers both of antiquity and of modern times. . . . They were imprisoned in his intellect, and it was his habit, when discoursing of art, politics,

morals, persons or things, to pause opportunely and evoke one or other of these spirits, his choice generally falling upon Dante or one of the Latins . . .”¹

Nor did he scruple at that time to proclaim his admiration for certain writers, repudiated by him at a later period. “It was Zanella who taught me to love Heine,” his disciple declares. “He lent me a French translation of his works, and for a long time Heine filled my thoughts by day and my dreams by night. I talked of him to my mother, who was unacquainted with his writings and who, from my descriptions, formed but a poor opinion both of the poet and of Professor Zanella.”² Thus through one who was by nature a true disciple of Virgil, did Antonio Fogazzaro become acquainted with the poetry of the barbarians. A strange anomaly this, if one reflects that Zanella later on developed a pronounced antipathy for everything German, an antipathy which ultimately assumed such proportions as to blind him completely, and render him unjust and acrimonious in his appreciations. But no teacher, no matter how complete his own subsequent conversion may be, can ever destroy the seeds he himself has sown in the virgin soil of a mind in process of formation.

But while Zanella was revealing the vast reaches of poetry to this youth whose soul thirsted for the beautiful, Fogazzaro was passing through the first of a series of confused crises.

“I entered the *Liceo*,” so he tells us, “with my imagination already inflamed by a vague inkling of evil, of which my understanding was as yet very incomplete. I found myself surrounded by most corrupt companions whose souls and bodies were already contaminated by vice. Fortunately for me I felt nothing but disgust for them. They filled me, indeed, with repugnance and loathing. I saw them as degraded beings, no longer capable of entertaining noble sentiments. Of course not all were of this stamp, but I failed nevertheless, to discover in any one of them that reciprocity of thought and sentiment which must form the foundation of every true friendship. Certain forms of coarseness and vulgarity to which I was unaccustomed, repelled and deeply offended me. I was certainly

¹ Antonio Fogazzaro, *Speeches*: “Giacomo Zanella.”

² Unpublished autobiographical notes.

held to be supercilious, a reputation I owed to my cold and reserved bearing and, above all, to my detestation of all that is vulgar. This reputation has since followed me more or less everywhere. My amorous imaginings were always as fervent as they were exalted. I imagined myself beloved by an ideal mistress, a superhuman being resembling *Sylphide* as Chateaubriand has described her. I was extraordinarily embarrassed, timid and awkward in the presence of ladies. Only with my *Sylphide* was I at my ease, and often addressed her in impassioned verse."

/ Fogazzaro graduated from the *Liceo* in 1858, whereupon it became necessary to choose a profession. Medicine and mathematics were out of the question. There remained literature./

"That was the study to which I longed to devote myself," he confesses, "but my father did not approve of my choice. He wished me to study law. I was sixteen, and possessed but a very imperfect knowledge of the world and its ways. I mourned for a time over my beloved poetry, which I felt I was sacrificing, but presently resigned myself to the study of law. To tell the truth, what I looked forward to most was the life I should lead as a student in an unfamiliar world, which my fancy painted as swarming with attractions of every sort. I hoped to be allowed to go to the university at Padua unaccompanied, but, much to my mortification, my father decided to go with me. . . . During the two months I spent at Padua I studied hardly at all. I enjoyed the delightful society of my three cousins, the Mazzi brothers from Bergamo, who were highly gifted and very good-natured, but rather rough and somewhat shy. I also became attached to Luigi Luzzatti, who is now one of the most popular and respected men in Italy. We used to recite our poetical compositions to one another, and he still remembers a poem of mine on Music, while I recall an ode of his which consisted of a very unusual description of the charms of an imaginary mistress. . . . At the beginning of January 1859 I fell ill at Padua and was convalescent when certain demonstrations on the part of the students caused the University to close its doors. The entire body of students received orders from the police to leave the city without delay. War was in the air in those days, and many immediately crossed over into Piedmont to enlist. On my return to Vicenza I suffered a relapse and, being threatened with pulmonary diffi-

culty, spent the entire winter in bed or at least in my room. I recuperated somewhat as the weather improved, and might even have been considered strong enough to join my companions in Piedmont. I formed a plan with this end in view, but my father, who feared the results to my health of such an undertaking, remonstrated most affectionately with me, begging me to sacrifice this desire of mine to the wishes of my parents. Although I was then nearly seventeen, I was as inexperienced of the ways of the world as a child of ten, and recognized my incapacity to arrange unaided a flight from Vicenza into Piedmont. There were those, indeed, at Vicenza who made it their business to get young men away in secret, but of this I was unaware, and no one mentioned the fact to me. One evening, pretending that I had a headache, I withdrew to my room, wrote a short letter to my parents and prepared to quit the house, go to the station and take the train to Milan. Before crossing the threshold of my home I paused to listen to my parents' quiet voices in a neighbouring room, and the courage failed me to inflict such deep sorrow upon my father and mother."

Fogazzaro never forgave himself this moment of weakness, which was due to a promise he had made to his father as well as to his state of physical exhaustion. His self-respect had received a wound which would never heal, and which no one, not even during the last years of his life, ever ventured to touch.

Meanwhile his studies had been interrupted first by illness and then by the war. During the months that elapsed between March and August he did nothing but read and scribble in a desultory manner.

"In August," he tells us, "we went to Valsolda. Lombardy was now free. At Bergamo and Milan, where we stayed for a time, we found the French army, of which a part had remained in Italy after peace had been concluded. But I never ceased to think of books, and it was while we were at Milan that I read for the first time a powerful work which immediately took a strong hold upon me—*Les Contemplations*, by Victor Hugo. My mother did not form a much more favourable opinion of Hugo than she had formed of Heine, owing to the somewhat unorthodox nature of the philosophy I was imbibing from his works. But this philosophy tallied so exactly with my own ideas, with my way of sensing nature! All nature lives in

Hugo's verse ; all nature teems with souls, with spirits that lay hidden in things. I thought of my Valsolda and became a fanatical admirer of the poet. My Catholicism meanwhile was undergoing a change, was becoming a vague religious sentiment, devoid of any other faith than that in God and the soul. It is true that from time to time I would experience a return towards Catholic beliefs and have moments of ardent devotion, especially in my beloved church at Valsolda. Such periods of devotion, however, were becoming ever more infrequent."¹

With the approach of autumn, it was decided that the family should follow the young man to the university ; but the choice still hung between Turin, Pisa or Pavia when he again fell ill. This illness lasted many months. A hematoma developed at the base of the left cheek which was operated on by a certain Father Nappi, a *Fatebenefratello*² who was destined to figure in *Malombra* as Father Tosi. But the operation failed to heal the sore, and finally erysipelas set in in a form so violent as to endanger the sufferer's life. This happened in April 1860.

When Garibaldi sailed for Sicily on May 5, Fogazzaro had just begun to convalesce, and it was long before he was able to resume his ordinary mode of life. Two years had thus been sacrificed which should have been devoted to study, and the young man must now prepare to make good the loss. At this point the painful question of the choice of a profession was again raised.

The long period of solitude in the country had perhaps helped to reawaken Fogazzaro's longing to pursue his favourite studies. In the depths of his soul he heard more distinctly than ever the murmurings of the voice of poetry.

Only Suor Maria Innocente in her isolation had sympathized with her nephew's aspirations, and in the prayer-laden atmosphere of her cell had sought to plead the cause of poetry with Don Giuseppe.

But all efforts were of no avail, for Antonio's father, supported in this by Giacomo Zanella himself, declared explicitly that his

¹ Unpublished autobiographical notes.

² A member of the congregation of S. Giovanni di Dio, a medical, religious fraternity. (Translator's Note.)

son did not possess sufficient imagination to create anything above the ordinary in art.

Those were days of bitterness for Antonio Fogazzaro, during which he suffered acutely not only from his father's lack of comprehension, but also because friends and teachers alike were deserting his cause.

In November 1860 the Fogazzaros moved to Turin. The family was in extremely straitened circumstances owing, in part at least, to recent political events which had determined Mariano to seek a home in exile. They occupied a small apartment in Piazza Castello to which one climbed by 118 steps, and Antonio's father was constrained to do the marketing himself.

At that time, however, Antonio Fogazzaro did not feel the burden of these financial difficulties, and was probably in no mood to justly appreciate the noble sacrifice his father was making with a stoical if somewhat ironical smile upon his lips. In those early days the young man was alive only to the delight of being in a great city. He was vaguely conscious of the need of living, loving and enjoying. There was about him a nervous and sparkling gaiety such as his family had never observed in him before, and which astonished those who had known him in his early adolescence, as taciturn and absorbed in dreams of his own.¹

As a consequence, so far as his legal studies were concerned, the years spent in Turin profited him but little, and were squandered aimlessly and in idleness. He himself confessed that the hours he spent at the billiard table far outnumbered those spent at the university, and that he had studied nothing but literature, and that only in a desultory and purposeless manner, while leading a life of dissipation.

"**MY DEAR CONFESSOR,**" he exclaims, in speaking of that period in his *Memoirs*, "everything concerning my true nature must be revealed to you, even those points it costs me most to lay bare. . . . The corruption that prevailed among my companions at Turin disgusted me at first as it also disgusted a friend of mine, and we promised one another that we ourselves would never fall

¹ Information concerning this period has been derived in part from private correspondence and in part from Fogazzaro's own accounts in the course of conversation.

so low. Soon, however, I learned, though not from him, that he had failed to live up to our ideal. I myself resisted for some time longer, but little by little and almost insensibly, my first feeling of loathing passed away ; little by little I not only grew accustomed to my companions' language but actually adopted it as my own, and soon might well have been taken for one of the most corrupt, a fact which was in no wise displeasing to me. . . . This pitch which besmirched my language I also touched. . . . I cannot find words to describe the loathing with which its contact filled me, nor how I despised myself for my weakness. I recall long hours spent in a state of unutterable remorse. Never again did I sink to such depths, but my imagination was tainted for all time. My friends, seeing that I did not copy their immoral habits, believed I had a secret love affair."¹

Meanwhile the young man had lost his religious faith. He had not passed through what might be termed a crisis of thought, nor had he experienced that storm of doubt which invades the sanctuary through a door opened upon the world, and extinguishes the lamp that burns before the tabernacle. Rather had a grey shadow crept from his senses to his soul, darkening it by imperceptible degrees. According to his own confession, Catholicism first dwindled in his mind to a species of vague spiritualism, which in turn gave place to that state of sentimentalism in which all that is realistic in the Christian religion becomes blurred and is finally dissolved. For some time after his faith was dead, Fogazzaro continued to observe the outward forms of the ritual, but one day during his third year at the university, his conscience, after much hesitation, finally warned him that nothing could justify insincere participation in the life of the Church, and that it was unseemly in one who had ceased to believe, to go to the last Mass on Sunday as were it merely some social function. After this he refrained from all religious practices.

" The first time I went for a walk instead of going to church," he recalls, " I experienced a certain sense of satisfaction as if I had rid myself of a heavy chain ; but I was nevertheless haunted by a vague dread lest I might be making a mistake. This doubt

¹ Unpublished autobiographical notes. Certain humorous poems which Fogazzaro hoped had been destroyed, and which bear testimony to this corruption both of language and imagination, also belong to this period.

I experienced most keenly on the first Easter Day I allowed to pass without approaching the Sacraments. I remember strolling for hours in the deserted Valentino Park in a state of acute mental strain.”¹

Then by slow degrees this state of agitation and of vague remorse was lulled to sleep in his restless soul. Of his religious youth he retained only his repugnance to materialistic atheism and a sense of attraction for the mystery that surrounds us, which exalted his imagination.

During this period, however, Antonio Fogazzaro had not relinquished his literary aspirations. We still possess a notebook filled with his poetical attempts, consisting of odes and hymns in a stilted style (which had been inspired, some by the Insurrection in Sicily, others by thoughts of Rome), and of verses in praise of the lark and nightingale. It was not until 1863, however, that his first poems appeared in the *Universo*; but no one, judging even by the best of these youthful productions, could have foreseen what the future was destined to bring forth.

/ Fogazzaro’s graduating year—1864—arrived at last./ The results of his examinations were anything but dazzling, and the scanty promise they afforded of a brilliant juridical career were not calculated to convince his father that Antonio would succeed any better in literature. The few poems he had published were insufficient to prove the existence of a vocation worthy of cultivation, and Antonio was again obliged to submit to the paternal will and enter the office of Avvocato Cassinis, as practising clerk, where he was employed as a copyist. From time to time he was allowed to plead before the military tribunal; but such cases as were entrusted to him were always either so simple or so desperate that there was little or nothing for the defence to say. Nor did he make any great progress in his profession after the removal of the family to Milan, which took place in November 1865, although he continued reading law there in the office of Avvocato Pompeo Castelli.

But while he was thus pursuing the hopeless and monotonous path of uncongenial occupations, a sentiment that would lead to one of the decisive events of his life was ripening within him.

¹ Unpublished autobiographical notes.

From his childhood Antonio Fogazzaro had known the Valmarana family at Vicenza. Since the days of games he had been closely attached to the eldest son of Count Angelo and Countess Giuseppina *née* Lampertico, and from the beginning had been greatly struck by his friend's little sister, Margherita.

"She never took part in our games," he writes, in analysing the origin of his attachment, "and I very rarely saw her. When I did see her I could hardly hear her voice. She appeared to live in another world, a higher world, so shy was she of mingling in our childish games, so serious and reserved. I heard her praised as being studious, especially of music. Later on I heard it said that she was haughty, and that she dominated the household. Given my peculiar nature, all this was calculated to attract me. When I met her in Turin I was charmed with her, I being then about twenty and she nineteen. She had a very slim and graceful figure, beautiful eyes and a most distinguished bearing. She talked but little, but what few remarks she made were apt and sensible. Her reserve was such that a single slight act of kindness, a single kind word of hers assumed immense importance in my eyes."

In the autumn of 1863 the two young people met again at Montegaldella, where the Valmaranas were visiting at the home of the Lamperticos. Other meetings took place during the holidays in 1864 and 1865, so that a letter from Giacomo Zanella, written towards the close of the winter of '66, in which he alluded to "certain sighings" for which his disciple was responsible, sufficed to fire the young man's smouldering passion. At that time the Valmaranas were about to pay a visit to Milan. "Throughout the night that preceded their arrival," he writes, recalling certain episodes that are connected with *Malombra*, "I never closed my eyes. Besides the fact of my infatuation, I fully realized the gravity of the step I was about to take. I spent the night in a state of extreme agitation, counting the hours as they struck at Sant 'Ambrogio—like Silla in the chapter entitled 'Quid me persequeris ?' ¹ I do not remember whether it was then or in the course of some preceding night that (again like Silla) I apostrophized the moon ! This all happened early in March 1866."

¹ Silla is a character in *Malombra*. (Translator's Note.)

A few days later Antonio Fogazzaro left for Vicenza, the bearer of a letter from his father to Don Giuseppe, which ran as follows :

“ **MIO CARISSIMO**,—I herewith dispatch to you and confide to your care my dearest Tonino, with the same words and confidence with which the aged Tobit confided his young Tobias to the Angel of the Lord ! Ask for the hand of his Rita, in our name, and lead him to the threshold of the new life comforted by your counsels and examples, from which he will derive strength to walk in the paths of holiness and justice before God and man. Amen ! May God bless them and us with them.—Your

“ **MARIANO.**” ¹

The happiness that attended upon the months of their engagement was not, however, without its admixture of bitterness. Antonio Fogazzaro was still very young and very inexperienced in practical matters. To one who has dreamed of love as something far removed from the events of this world, as the supreme meeting of two souls in the hottest hour of humanity’s spring-time, it is painful to discover that before reaching Psyche, Eros must first give his attention to providing all that is required by two people living on this ball of clay.

Nevertheless, after moments of unpleasant contact with reality, such as that in which he learned from Don Giuseppe that the financial conditions of his family were such as to necessitate his drawing profit from his legal studies, he enjoyed periods of perfect happiness that were destined to leave their trace upon his future life. At that time—it was in the spring—the Valmaranas had moved to their usual summer resort, Seghe di Velo, and this rustic prelude to the approaching nuptials certainly formed one of the periods of purest delight. Love had led the young man into a region that was to become one of the “ countries of his spirit,” and he was in that state of mind best adapted to a full understanding and appreciation of its singular beauties. This austere hollow, in which the Posina and Astico meet and mingle, had nothing in common with his beloved Valsolda, but the richly wooded and lavishly watered landscape might well inspire “ sounding stanzas teeming with

¹ Letter from Mariano to Don Giuseppe Fogazzaro, March 27, 1866.

fauns, oreads and dryads."¹ Valsolda was the land of his most peaceful and indelible memories. It was the home of his childhood. Its atmosphere was that of religion and simplicity which also pervades his art in its most perfect expression. Velo d'Astico, on the other hand, was the land of his youth and passions. In it his soul thrilled to another hidden aspect of life. Its trees and streams had a different voice. Here other spirits spoke to him out of the grasses and the clouds ; here the meaning of noontide and of twilight was another. As yet the face and soul of Elena were unknown to him, but something of her already lurked in this landscape that appeared to be awaiting the consummation of a tragic idyll. The most tempestuous, restless and sensuous side of his art was destined to take root in that valley. When he rambled in the grounds of what he would one day designate as Daniele's villa, he already felt the existence of certain secret affinities that bound his soul for all time to that verdant corner of the world, all alive with spirits and intangible forms. Again and again he was destined to return to that garden, in the days of wildest passion as in his last days when his hair was white and the mighty battle had been fought ; and always he would find in it, amongst the roots and the grasses, something palpitating that was a part of his *ego* of long ago, of his youthful, almost childish self, to which all the voices of the woods had spoken a new language, the ardent language of love and of earth's mysteries.

The wedding took place at Vicenza on the evening of July 31, 1866. Fogazzaro's letters of that period reveal how fervently happy and full of confidence he was. An historic event had also transpired which had flooded his soul with a great and unexpected joy, and was as the complement of his own personal happiness. This was the deliverance of Venetia. The news of it had reached Vicenza on July 7. "Is it a dream ? Is it reality ?" he wrote to his father.

The news was true indeed. On July 15 the Italian troops entered Vicenza. Soon after their marriage the young couple, then on their wedding journey, left Padua with the first detachment of troops sent out to receive the King, and met Victor

¹ Letter from Antonio to Mariano Fogazzaro, May 21, 1866.

Emmanuel in his *calesse*, on his way to make his triumphal entry. Thus were two of Antonio Fogazzaro's most ardent desires realized almost simultaneously.

But life may give us all we have wished for, and yet leave us unsatisfied if the soul be not at peace with itself, have not discovered its own laws.

Antonio lacked faith and a purpose, and consequently his domestic felicity was imperfect and unstable. He had no definite end in view, and therefore, although he loved and saw his love requited, he still remained in that state of isolation to which every individual is doomed who has not found his true mission among his fellow-men. Like one alive to the necessity of escaping from the narrow circle of his own selfish sphere, his heart was stirred by a thousand aspirations, but as yet his character was too unformed to enable him to distinguish the place he was destined to occupy in the battle of life. The wings of his dreams were beating the air in a grey and starless sky. He was passing through that hour of trial which proved so fatal to many men of his generation.

Italy appeared exhausted by the effort she had put forth to obtain her freedom, and this sense of weariness prevailed throughout the peninsula, alike among those who had been born too late and those who had been born too early, among the sons of those who had fought in '48 or in '59, but who, on laying down their arms, had failed to point out a new mission to be accomplished by their offspring. As is the case after all periods of national exaltation, the tension of aspirations was relaxed, and the life of Italy passed through that crisis of apparent disintegration wherein each individual goes his own way according to the dictates of his own immediate and urgent needs, as if seeking to re-establish his own autonomy regardless of more lofty ideal interests.

Such was the great danger to which Antonio Fogazzaro was exposed. "I no longer did anything," he writes. "My ideals had collapsed. I had no further hopes in life."¹ Nevertheless, because the fire still smouldered beneath the ashes, he was keenly alive to the shame of a useless and inactive existence. This

¹ Unpublished autobiographical notes.

sense of humiliation, indeed, caused him cruel suffering, especially as he was obliged, and also fully determined, to hide his true state of mind in order not to distress those dearest to him. There were moments when this suppressed bitterness of spirit made him long for death. At such times he would take refuge in some solitary spot and fairly torture himself, pressing the thorns ever deeper into his flesh. At such times also, it was impossible for him to confide in a friend or seek help. He was too much given to hiding a wound within himself," and brooding over it in secret. "All this," he tells us, "helped to bring about that slowly developing inflammation of which I was destined never to be radically cured, and from which I first suffered between 1866 and 1868."¹ This inflammation left the scar which the surgeon's knife revealed on the eve of Fogazzaro's death.

Of Milan, however, he retained some pleasant memories, thanks to the numerous friends he had immediately made there, some of whom are connected with his earliest artistic aspirations.

Certain letters addressed to Giacomo Zanella prove that the friendships the Fogazzaro family formed were, for the most part, among men of conservative views. Mariano stood on a footing of familiarity in the world in which Manzoni ruled supreme, so much so, indeed, that through Rossari he was able to get the short poem entitled *Milton and Galileo* submitted for judgment to the great Lombard writer. But the Fogazzaros were so broad-minded and open-hearted that cordial intercourse was also maintained with men professing opposite views, and in the course of those years spent in Milan the members of the family frequently came into contact with followers of Mazzini. This is a point which must not be overlooked, because it was in this circle that Antonio Fogazzaro discovered an interesting type which he reproduced in *Malombra*, where the man who was known in reality as Abbondio Chialiva, figures as Count Cesare d'Ormengo.

Antonio Fogazzaro was a frequent visitor at his house. The young man owed his introduction to his father, who had seen much of Chialiva on the Lake of Lugano, where they had met immediately after the sad events of 1848, and, although differing both in temperament and in their political creeds, had formed a

¹ Unpublished autobiographical notes.

friendship based upon their common faith in Italy's destiny. Chialiva had been a *carbonaro* since the earliest days of that society's existence. Born of noble but poor parents in a village near Ivrea, in a region where every artisan has his coat-of-arms and his traditions of noble descent, he had been forced to cross the Alps in search of work and freedom after the uprisings of 1821. By a mere chance Arrigo Boito discovered the young man's name—who was then on his way into exile—in the visitors' book at the Grand St. Bernard. The entry runs: "Chialiva Abonde de Piémont—*In secundis time, in adversis spera*—24, viii. 1821—*Veras divitias eripit nemo.*"¹ The two Latin sentences tell more eloquently than might a far more lengthy discourse of the spirit of fortitude and contempt for poverty that sustained him in his wanderings.

Chialiva was an isolated figure in Italian political life, a personage but little known to history, but interesting as the type of the proud-spirited, noble-hearted *carbonaro* of the old school, a man of a complex nature, an acute and whimsical judge of men and events, caustic and sceptical, too sceptical indeed for direct action, but the staunch friend of hot-headed agitators. In his apartment in Via della Passione he received Carlo Cattaneo, Piolti de Bianchi, that eccentric personage Count Lana of Brescia and many of Mazzini's foreign followers. Like all men of his political creed, he was fiercely anti-clerical, hating priests in general and the Pope in particular. His anti-clericalism, however, did not exclude faith in God and in the immortality of the soul, nor was it allowed to exclude from his house such avowed Catholics as were true lovers of Italy, and thus both Tullio Dandolo and Mariano Fogazzaro had their place there as old friends.

In this wise Antonio was enabled to frequent this interesting milieu, a society rich in contrasts both as regards ideas and human types, wherein he (who was generally shy of all contact with the literary world), met many representatives of the "young Lombard school" who were the companions of Abbondio Chialiva's son. They were a band of extremely youthful rebels and innovators in art, amongst whom the most distinguished were

¹ He was accompanied by Louis Bassi de Mentone. I owe further information concerning Chialiva to Arrigo Boito.

Emilio Praga, Carlo Mancini and Camillo and Arrigo Boito. In that sedate Milanese world wherein Manzoni still held sway like some invisible tutelary deity, this group stood for revolt against the trammels of objective and conservative romanticism which had reached its highest point in *I Promessi Sposi*, and a return to that subjective, restless and confused form which was the latest phase of romanticism in France and Germany.

Antonio Fogazzaro became especially friendly with Arrigo Boito, whom he had esteemed from the outset as the most talented and temperate of the group, and for whom throughout life he cherished a sentiment that was a mingling of respect and admiration. As a matter of fact, that eccentric youth, sparkling with genius, whose poetical works, composed between 1862 and 1867, were a happy forecast of greater things to come, was the only member of his group capable of broad flights of thought and of a strong and lofty conception in art. He stood at that time only upon the threshold—was but preparing for the fray—but his soul already held enshrined that great musical poem which was destined to reveal him to the world in 1868. Like Goethe, he felt the fascination of the two worlds—the Hellenic and the barbaric, and from northern mountain tops, where his musical inspiration re-evoked the sabbath of witches, he loved to let it soar in luminous dreams of a classic sabbath. Had he been born in other days he would have been a necromancer, prying into mysteries, probing the very depths of souls and of things with a cold and piercing eye; in his own day, however, he was forced to confine his incantations to the realms of pure art, as in the solitude of a lonely cave.

It was precisely because of these characteristics of his that Fogazzaro preferred him to the others, but he had no part in Boito's intellectual life. He had but one thing in common with the followers of the "young Lombard school"—admiration for German poetry. Nor did these associates of his comprehend at the time that in this somewhat timid and awkward young Vicentine, whose exterior stamped him as too staid to participate in their own intellectual rebellion, there dwelt a great promise for Italian letters.

It was not until the spring of 1868 that he was able to resume

his studies with any degree of energy. He then passed his final examinations at Milan, taking his degree as a barrister. "Up to this point I had determined to comply with my parents' wishes, but no further. They had hoped I would open an office at Vicenza, foreseeing a successful career for me at a time when few or no other lawyers in that town were as yet familiar with Italy's new code. But I would have preferred death to exercising my profession as a barrister."¹

Writing to Don Giuseppe to announce the result of his examinations, he said :

"Here I stand a full-fledged barrister, which is a blessing for my future clients. Meanwhile I shall put the Civil Code on the reserve list, send Procedure on a vacation and condemn the Penal Code to solitary confinement. This is my first act of authority. After a couple of days, which I intend to dedicate to Idleness, the father of the Muses, I shall begin to turn over the leaves of some book that has not crystallized into articles ; rotatory cultivation is as necessary for the mind as for the soil. I should very much like to take up the subject of religious poetry in Italy, and in order to start with its origin, begin with the earliest development of the poetic sentiment in Christianity. At least this would give my reading a plan and purpose."²

Hardly had his firm determination brought him to the fulfilment of his obligations than he was thus inevitably drawn towards those forms of activity for which he was born. His personal sufferings and the discomfort of his domestic relations were but increased by the attitude he assumed, and it here becomes necessary to touch upon his financial difficulties which were the result of his obstinate refusal to yield to the paternal will and follow the legal profession.

"I believe," he confesses, "that few young men of my age had so little money in their pockets as I had. This fact pained me not so much because of the privations it entailed, as because I felt I was being treated unjustly. Nevertheless my temperament and my firm determination to pursue my studies at cost of no matter what sacrifice, instead of

¹ Unpublished autobiographical notes.

² Letters from Antonio to Don Giuseppe Fogazzaro, Milan, May 21, 1868.

following a profession which might bring me affluence, enabled me to accept my position in silence. I never complained nor owed a penny. Before my marriage I was allowed twenty *lire* a month as pocket-money. That was riches compared with my position later on when my father allowed me five hundred *lire* a year, out of which I was also obliged to clothe myself. I can smile now when I recall how, when I had to spend one hundred *lire* for a wedding present for my sister, I was forced to wear my winter clothes throughout the ensuing summer. At the time, however, if I smiled at all, it must have been with a wry face. I also experienced a sense of satisfaction in having derived no personal benefit from my wife's fortune. . . . My father was not avaricious—quite the contrary. Probably at the outset he had hoped by this policy to oblige me to take up a lucrative profession, and later on, seeing I did not complain, he concluded I was satisfied. It must also be borne in mind that he was displeased with my attitude. . . .”¹

Amidst all this moral and material misery a ray of sunshine came to illuminate Antonio's path for a brief moment. / In 1869 his eldest daughter, Gina, was born. / But the joy of this happy family event did not succeed in dissipating the heavy clouds that encompassed the young man's spirit. On the contrary, that autumn spent at Velo was one of his worst periods. /

/ To one person only (that person to whom he confided his *Memoirs*) did he ever speak of this moment. He had been overwhelmed by grief and emotion on discovering in a forgotten drawer at Valsolda these testimonials to his early ambitions. His former hopes were rekindled as by a mysterious spark. Falling upon his knees beneath the humiliating load of wasted years, of so much of his youth squandered in idleness, his youth that, as yet, had borne no fruit either for himself or others, he shed, upon his own misery, the tears that purify. No one knew of this crisis, no one noticed how red his eyes were with weeping; but it was as one renewed by a miracle that he came forth from that chamber where he had again found his soul in all its purity, his soul that had remained there in the land of his innocent childhood, waiting for his return. This was no conversion in a religious sense; the mystic crisis was yet a long way off; this was but a

¹ Unpublished autobiographical notes.

first rebellion of the spirit against the slavery of the senses. The poet was a forerunner of the believer. His whole life was destined to be renewed by this dedication of himself to art. / It was a decisive hour in which, through the door of labour, he was entering upon a new life. “In the shadow of overhanging clouds . . . the night’s wandering Muses were interceding with the Eternal One for him.”¹

¹ *Miranda*, Enrico’s Book, II. vi.

CHAPTER III

MIRANDA—VALSOLDA—THE CONVERSION

It was at this period that Antonio Fogazzaro began to contemplate writing a novel. In fact he actually wrote a couple of pages which figured later—with some slight alterations—as the beginning of *Malombra*, and contain the description of the departure of the night express. For some years, however, these pages were laid aside. The interest in the novel, of which he still had but a vague conception, had been overshadowed by the interest Fogazzaro developed in a short poem upon which he immediately set to work. This was *Miranda*.

At that moment *Miranda* was no mere work of art through which he might become famous, but the anchor to which, on the verge of moral shipwreck, he had attached his soul. As a consequence he worked at it very slowly but with great earnestness, having it ever in mind but composing only a few lines a day, as if fearing to reach the end too soon. A fresh attack of his malady obliging him to spend many hours in a reclining-chair, he found consolation for his discomfort and loneliness in this poetical work. *Miranda* was all his own, for there was no one who still believed him capable of creating anything of worth, and he could not bring himself to confide even to his nearest and dearest, his own renewed faith in his future.

When the book was finished his father, who was deputy for Marostica, which constituency he had represented since 1866, was in Rome. Antonio sent him the manuscript.

This was a decisive moment in Fogazzaro's life. The perusal of the manuscript filled his father with admiration for the poem, and he sent Antonio a letter which showed that he no longer regretted his son's refusal to embrace the legal profession.

The poem, nevertheless, was destined to cost him no little trouble and mortification.

In those days editors were more inclined than they now are to look askance upon and actually avoid the productions of young authors. Fogazzaro applied first to Treves in the hope that he would publish the work ; but that editor wrote to him saying that his firm had decided to publish poetical works only at their author's expense. This was merely a polite way of refusing to have anything to do with *Miranda*. Fogazzaro then applied to Barbera, but the Florentine's reply was no more satisfactory. . . . The young author, indeed, was ultimately obliged to submit to the humiliation he had hoped to be spared. Those editors, who did not refuse outright, sought pretexts to postpone the publication indefinitely, and the poet's father, who was impatient to see the work in print, finally decided to publish at his own expense.

“ On the whole *Miranda* was well received,” Fogazzaro declares in his *Memoirs*. “ There was much written and said about it. Adverse criticism was not lacking, coming, for the most part, from a certain group of distinguished writers ; but, on the other hand, my self-esteem received many and important compensations. My work was especially appreciated by people of culture not making literature their profession. The greatest honour was conferred upon me by Gino Capponi, whom Leopardi, Manzoni and Giusti had loved and revered. Although already old and blind, he sent me a copy of one of his books in which he had written : ‘ To the author of *Miranda*.’ ”

Fogazarro also received an interesting letter from Gino Capponi.¹

Antonio Fogazzaro's romance in verse, however, was destined to please and also to assume significance, thanks to the peculiar state of intellectual bewilderment then prevailing in Italy. It was then impossible to foresee how Giosue Carducci would one day stretch forth his strong hand and snatch the poetry of the land from its state of languor. Carducci, who was thirty-nine at that time, had already written much, but had as yet failed to reveal himself as the poet of the Third Italy. On the other hand, the most youthful element in the literary world felt the need of

¹ Published as a *Pro Nozze* on the occasion of the Franco-Valmarana marriage.

renewal through contact with reality, and as in philosophy the general trend was towards positivism, so in art signs of realism began to appear. But whereas a return to truth might have freed them from literary conventionalism and insincerities both old and new, whereas the cult of nature, a pure love of life in all its richness, might have caused fresh blood to course through the flaccid arteries of Italian literature, that false and unilateral effort to examine and describe only the baser and carnal side of humanity which was the dominant attribute of this reactionary realism, could have no other result than to degrade poetry to a state of utter vulgarity. Now during this unhappy period—a period of extinction on one hand and of preparation on the other—Fogazzaro had, by means of this poetical romance of his, been seeking the paths of truth, of a “definite, lofty and eternal truth,” as he himself declared to Gino Capponi. / He sought to bring poetry down from the high academic Olympus, and to associate it with everyday life. / This effort of his to adapt poetry, sentiment and expression to a real world and to simple, everyday events, also contained the determination to discover in what way poetry, sentiment and expression may best be used to “raise the spirit above the sad realities by which it is lacerated day by day.” He was bound to remain faithful to reality indeed, but only by portraying what is most intimate, spiritual, pure and fastidious in the human soul. This attempt on the poet’s part must have come almost as a revelation to those who were unutterably weary of rhetoric, and who, while firmly persuaded that poetical inspiration could be renewed only through more direct contact with ordinary experiences, could not tolerate without a sense of nausea a realistic art encompassed by blind materialism, which by ignoring everything but the lower and animal side of life, reduced it by half. “This poet, who has written a poem that is always poetry, that is lucid in form, chaste in style and thought, entirely original and in many respects unique,” as Capponi said, might well appear to many as the one destined to point a new way.

/ Considered to-day on its own merits alone, this poetical romance by which Antonio Fogazzaro initiated his literary career, appears to contain more faults than virtues, and a glance will

suffice to show us how faded and yellowed by time certain portions of it have become, like a tree that has felt the approach of autumn. This is probably because, while it does indeed reflect a large part of that sensibility that had its roots in one aspect of the actual but confused psychology of the times, it nevertheless lacks that truthfulness in the delineation of its characters which, being founded on the study of life itself, never grows old in art.¹ When compared with other characters of Fogazzaro's creation, all so vigorously alive, *Miranda* and *Enrico* convey the impression of two personifications of a dual sentiment of their author's own, rather than two distinct hearts, two distinct souls, each capable of leading its own life and harbouring conflicting passions.

Nevertheless, notwithstanding the fundamental defects of this "pale, exceedingly pale," little poem, which, as its author foresaw, has "shed its verdure by a natural process," we feel justified in judging it with leniency, if we consider it in connection with its times and with Fogazzaro's further achievements, if we consider it as what it really was—a promise and an endeavour. Although *Miranda* is but the attempt of a young writer still seeking his way, there are nevertheless to be found in that attempt certain intentions that connect it with those tendencies and fundamental qualities of the author's spirit and art which have earned for him a place in the literary history of our times.

As soon as *Miranda* was finished Fogazzaro set to work again. He had now achieved a higher consciousness of art, and arrived at a more precise conviction of what his duty really was. To his father he wrote on this subject: "To say I am insensible to praise would be ridiculous; but apart from that susceptibility which it is impossible and useless to seek to hide, I have a clear and precise conception of the worthlessness of praise, of fame and of glory as compared with the high purpose one should seek to achieve, namely, the fulfilment of the moral obligation of employing the faculties of one's mind according to the consciousness one possesses of that obligation and of those faculties."¹ He

¹ Letter from Antonio to Mariano Fogazzaro, May 25, 1874.

had now left the period of inactive hesitancy definitely behind him. He felt that poetry was his mission and the fortunes of his first book were but so many signs to point the way more clearly.

/ In 1876, therefore, about two years after the appearance of *Miranda*, he published *Valsolda*. / Many of the compositions contained in this volume were of an earlier date than *Miranda*, while others were of the same period ; these were the best. But the public had looked forward to something more important, and the volume was not received with any great display of enthusiasm. "My opinion is," so Fogazzaro wrote, "that certain poems, such as *Cecilia*, *La Madonnina del Faggio*, *Regina*, *Caslano* and *Dramma Notturno*, are really worth something. Some critics there were who preferred *Valsolda* to *Miranda*, but on the whole the book was considered disappointing."¹

For us who have set out to study his life and art, not as purposely detached elements, but as two sides of an indivisible whole, / *Valsolda* represents both a new aspect of Fogazzaro's poetical inspiration and a new epoch in his spiritual life. / For through these verses "written with far more passion than art, for a beloved friend (*amica*) of my early . . . years," who had given him "many hours of happiness and to whom the poetry of a stone or a leaf was more than all the doctrines of all the literati,"² he was returning in spirit to the land of his childhood.

But he was returning richer in sentiment, as one who has suffered and become more capable of understanding and humanizing the life of Nature, as one who knows the taste of tears.

/ " *Soldato, avanti !* Where there is strife there my place is ! " These are the last words of *Valsolda*, but they are the first of the rule of life upon which his mission as a poet is founded. For he was now come into possession of a faith that urged him beyond the inactive contemplation of Nature, towards striving and suffering humanity ; and this is the faith of Christ to which he had returned.

Concerning his withdrawal from the Church and his sub-

¹ Unpublished autobiographical notes.

² Preface to the first edition.

sequent return to her, Fogazzaro never spoke without that sense of pain and almost of secrecy which rendered the revelation of his past painful to Manzoni also. Some spirits have a horror of giving publicity to the most sacred events and solemn moments of their inner life, of revealing the drama of their conscience to a prying world. They fear the distortions language may produce—language which is always inadequate to express the emotions of the spirit, the fervour of a solemn moment in the religious life. Some of his letters, nevertheless, and certain brief allusions made in the course of confidential conversation, have provided us with a key to the psychological process that led to his return to the Catholic faith.

As far as appearances went he had never left the Church. We are even told in his *Memoirs* how careful he was, when he had finally ceased to practise his religion, to conceal this fact from his parents, to whom the knowledge would have been one of the greatest sorrows of their lives. For some years he had struggled with himself in an attempt to reconcile this act of charity towards those dearest to him with perfect honesty towards his own conscience, and he apparently succeeded in so doing, for no one, not even those most closely associated with him, realized how far he had wandered from their common faith. This period of complete detachment from all religious practices must have been short, however. On his marriage he had been forced to resume participation in the outer life of the Church, although still far removed from it in spirit. There is, indeed, a purely formal manner of participating in the ritual of Catholicism, a manner which does not implicate any real acceptance either of its doctrines or moral teachings.

Such must have been the manner of Fogazzaro's participation in the life of the Church before his conversion, and during those years that stretched between 1866 and 1873, when he vegetated in the Church, albeit not without much religious discomfit, but also without any spiritual recognition of her doctrines.

Two currents, however, were working secretly within him at that time, to prepare the path to faith. One was that of his own dissatisfaction with himself, with his achievements, his youth, which was passing without producing either flower or fruit

—a dissatisfaction arousing a sense of humiliation that may lead a soul to sigh not only over its vanished illusions but also for a haven of peace towards which to direct all the restless energies of an unsatisfied spirit. / The other current that was at work within him was his sense of honesty. / For if his first motive for abstaining from participation in the sacraments had been to avoid the performance of acts he deemed sacrilegious because, to him, they were mere forms, it must now perforce have become irksome to him to participate in rites which justified the conclusion that he still possessed a faith that was no longer his. His conscience, ever sensitive as regards perfect sincerity, fearing ever to mislead by appearances, must have rendered this position a difficult one, the position of one whose faith being dead still participates in the exterior cult. Filial piety could not constitute an excuse sufficient to justify his mendacity, nor render him insensible to the remorse he must have experienced at not being able to participate with his whole intellect, his whole life, in acts which have no value save in so far as they constitute a public confession of complete acceptance of the Catholic creed. It is an easy matter enough for superficial minds to adapt themselves to religious conventionalism for simple reasons of convenience: for loyal, profound minds this insincere attitude is an ever present source of pain, a sharp thorn that pierces the flesh at every step.

Certainly such sentiments as these and others that are beyond our ken must have inclined his heart towards the hidden light, when by a mere chance there fell into his hands a book that had a decisive influence on his life—*La Philosophie du Credo*, by Gratry.

“ I was ill,” he wrote in 1883, “ when I read the book for the first time, ten years ago, in the midst of the sad splendour of a November day, seated upon the ground in a hushed and lonely bosom of the Euganean Hills, not far from Torreglia. My companions had gone up to the convent of Rua, but I, who could not walk so far, sat waiting for them, engrossed in my reading. I was greatly depressed at the time, owing in part to my physical sufferings, in part also to a bitter consciousness of several forms of moral discomfort. *I wished to believe,*

to rest, to refresh my spirit in the Lord, in Whom alone one is sure of finding peace ; and so often all this was impossible to me. I began to read with a heart overflowing with hope and longing ; I was deeply moved by the time I was ready to close the book. . . .”¹

Something, he himself explains, in commenting a passage in Gratry had taken place within him. “ By an act of mercy God awakens in our hearts the desire to believe, and hereupon he who yields to this desire, who does not allow a proud intellect to prevail against it, obtains the gift of faith.”² He himself had yielded, had not withheld his longing for God. On that day of a dying autumn, gilded by a pale sun and yellowing grasses, in the heart of the lonely hills that slope downwards to the mist-enshrouded plains of Venetia, the poet must have been alive to the prelude to God in nature even before he found it in his book. The place itself seemed prepared expressly to be the scene of one of those sacred moments in which the soul hears the invitation to abandon itself completely to Him who speaks without the sound of words.

In all accounts of conversions we find one such moment of sacred silence in which God speaks. He had made His voice audible to Fogazzaro through the pages of the little, unfamiliar volume that had fallen into his hands at the right moment. It was a book written expressly for the purpose of touching hearts wavering between faith and unbelief, its contents taking the form of a conversation between an ecclesiastic and General Lamoricière, the outlaw of December 2, in the course of which the priest seeks to translate the formulæ of theology into the language of the present day, and this with a religious fervour that seems to vivify even the catechism with human poetry—the catechism that is so barren when repeated only with the lips. It was the work of a believer striving to free the teaching of the Church from those prejudices that distort it in the minds of most men of the world, and to lead a harassed spirit back to that doctrine which “ to-day has once more become the doctrine of the Unknown God.” In Gratry the soul might draw deep breaths of the divine, and from one who had looked upon

¹ Letter to E—, October 12, 1883.

² *Ibid.*, October 19, 1883.

Catholicism as a spiritual prison, the book might well elicit the exclamation made later on by a man of thought who was even "higher and more impelling than Gratry," Malebranche. "No one who reads his words with true understanding can maintain that one does not breathe freely in Catholic dogma, or that it can occasion any discomfort. Unfortunately, however, our education as well as many defects in the mundane and mutable parts of the Catholic religion cause us to create in imagination a false Catholicism against which our spirit rebels, and we do not always take the trouble to investigate whether Catholicism is indeed as we imagine it. . . ." ¹

Many times indeed, before that day, Fogazzaro had repeated the apostolic Symbol mechanically without troubling himself to probe its true meaning. For the first time Gratry unrolled before his astonished intellect those formulæ that had been as a closed book to him; revealed to him the Life that animates them; guided him towards the heights of a theology that is no mere barren disputation, but the contemplation of things divine. For the first time he learnt to meditate upon the words "heaven" and "earth" and to see the creation as a sacred drama of which man is the central figure, and this planet but a moment of trial on his upward journey; learnt to regard the "fiat" not in a material aspect as so many detached acts of the creative Will, but to feel God present and active in the universe, the innermost Law of all life which, ascending by degrees from the inert matter of which the globe is composed, culminates in the freedom of the human intellect that understands and worships. Gratry was no evolutionist, and some years later Fogazzaro wrote :

" . . . what Gratry says concerning the creation of man did not satisfy even me. . . . I have always had a leaning towards the Darwinian theory, which is in no wise irreligious. Darwin was a fervent believer in the creation. Gratry may say: 'There was a moment in which the living being who, but an instant before, was not, came into existence,' or he may say the same thing of matter in general. The miracle is no less mighty." ²

¹ Letter to E——, October 20, 1883.

² *Ibid.*, October 19, 1883.

But Fogazzaro found in Gratry his own desire not to oppose religion to science or truth to truth, but rather to translate the story of origin directly from the Bible into the language of our own times. He also found in him that profound sense of the divine in nature which was the true root of his own faith in evolution.

If Fogazzaro the artist found in the book a source of inspiration, Fogazzaro the man saw in the light it shed upon the main dogma of the Incarnation a strong appeal to reform his inner life. For the first time, now in the fulness of his manhood, a voice demanded whether he be indeed a Christian, or rather whether he could affirm his belief in God made man. "If Jesus Christ be God and Christianity truth, your way of life must undergo a transformation," this voice declared. To one who for years had lived almost entirely estranged from the mystery of Jesus, the *Philosophy of the Credo* was well adapted to reveal all the beauties of this faith as it had been held through the centuries by the Fathers; it opened up the vast horizons of the plan of creation which enrolls itself in this "assumption of humanity" by which means the Creator reconducts to Himself what has emanated from Himself, reunites with Himself, in the Son of man, nature sanctified, washed in blood, exalted and raised up even unto the Father in Christ resurrected. But, if all this be true, said Gratry, and the spirit be honestly seeking to find truth in it, the seeker must attune his life to this truth, must find proof of it in himself. Believing or striving to believe, the law of Christ must be acknowledged, the law which is as a mirror of Himself, which means acceptance of visible or hidden suffering that our life may be a crucifixion; which means the severance of the spirit from all vain happenings and its concentration upon what is eternal, that our life may be a resurrection. To crucify ourselves with Christ is to sacrifice everything that selfish motives prompt man to seek, is penitence and prayer, which enable the soul to breathe in the aura of the Almighty, that the savage voice of the *ego*, crying out in our senses, may be stifled. To rise again with Christ is to detach the soul, in its progress towards divine life, from the inert and carnal mass of *things*, to allow our being to expand in the Supreme Being;

to appreciate what is eternal, to delight in a higher form of beauty which exists even in pain ; to live already beyond this mundane sphere which is destined one day to pass into eternal light.

Such was the invitation to renew his whole life, his whole manner of thought which Fogazzaro accepted with the eagerness of one to whom is restored that which he had sought with longing out of the depths of his religious aspirations. For a book affects us only in so far as it answers to some unexpressed need of our spirit, and the light that had suddenly shone forth within him did not come from the book itself, but from his own heart and from Something beyond. From that moment, however, there began within him the struggle between two worlds, to one of which he had heretofore been indifferent. When the conscience is brought face to face with Christianity, this struggle must inevitably ensue.

In Fogazzaro it began on that day spent in the hills, and was destined to endure throughout his life ; it produced a continuous ebb and flow between the spirit and the senses ; an ever-recurring state of wavering between earth and heaven, wherein the spirit would often be lifted up towards God, but as often also find itself abandoned to its own weakness. In certain religious conversions the flashing forth of truth produces an inner heat of such intensity as to destroy the roots of all sensualism, in which case the subject feels himself a "new man" indeed. These are the heroic conversions that subvert a life and direct it completely towards the infinite, pointing to renunciation and the desert as the only roads to salvation. But with weaker natures such as Fogazzaro's, conversion assumes a different form. All earth's voices were still vibrating in his heart ; his nerves and arteries still throbbed with all of a poet's sensibility ; the songs of many nameless creatures lay in the depths of his soul like sirens at the bottom of the sea. In him the Christian ideal could conquer but by slow degrees, and only after an inner struggle with sensualism ; which consideration supplies the key to Fogazzaro's mystical unrest and to the secret of his art, from which the element of pain is never absent.

CHAPTER IV

FOGAZZARO'S VOCATION AS A NOVELIST

WHEN Antonio Fogazzaro began to write *Malombra* he had, as we have seen, already ascertained his own inner direction. But not only in religion had he surmounted a crisis of doubt ; he had now, after long consideration, become clearly aware of the line his literary mission in Italy must take.

There exists an essay by him which is but little known and which, for some inexplicable reason, has never been reprinted. It is entitled *Concerning the Future of the Novel in Italy*,¹ and was written when *Miranda* was but just beginning to stir in the author's imagination. In this essay the convictions he held when about to enter upon his mission and the strongholds around which the literary labours of forty years would be grouped, are already clearly defined.

A reperusal to-day of that paper read before the members of the Olympic Academy (at one of whose assemblies Goethe himself had once been present, an unrecognised guest among the be-wigged disputants of the Palladian city), reveals to us a programme which sheds a new light on the mass of Fogazzaro's labours in the field of romance, demonstrating as it does their profound intention and unity of ideal. The man his fellow-citizens were still addressing by the vague title of "doctor," herein points out, with great lucidity, the reasons for his belief in his vocation as a novelist.

It was his firm conviction that the novel was the book of the times. It was precisely because of its power as an instrument of suggestion that Fogazzaro maintained that this book for all

¹ A Paper read by Doctor Antonio Fogazzaro at the assembly held on May 21, 1872, "Acts of the Olympic Academy of Vicenza." In matters appertaining to Fogazzarian bibliography I would refer the reader to the volume entitled *Antonio Fogazzaro*, by Sebastiano Rumor, who for years has made this branch his especial study.

must not be the work of any one and every one, but only of the very few who feel the gravity and sanctity of the writer's office, and who, without setting out to demonstrate any given religious or moral thesis, are nevertheless capable of observing the world and scrutinizing souls in the full light of day, and from a "reposeful altitude whence they may perceive light and shadow there where the sun has really shed them on life's way." But such writers as these, who are priests as well, where are they to be found ?

Manzoni, indeed, was still alive, but the grand old sage was but as the venerable shadow of one who has outlived his work, which lies far behind him. Nor could his masterpiece any longer suffice to satisfy the new demands of a public for whom a single book, no matter how superior, was not enough. The family of historical novels which had its origin in *I Promessi Sposi* had died out in the second generation, after becoming but lifeless and shadowy imitations. The Italian reader was forced to seek his supply of daily bread from foreign sources, and it was often the worst form of literature that reached us from beyond the Alps. And yet how much poetry there was, albeit scattered and neglected, in our own race, in our own land ; how much beauty, voiceless and unheeded, was awaiting the advent of those who should reveal it ! But now, in Fogazzaro's opinion, the time was come for a national art that should reveal to the Italians their country's most secret treasures of poetry and art, painting the innumerable types, individualities, traditions and beliefs that are to be found amongst our people, and that may well serve to emancipate the novelist, in his study of what is true, from all necessity of imitating the foreigner. / Not only the landscape, but the very soul of the modern novel must be Italian. /

Such were the theories which Fogazzaro held on setting about his task as a novelist. The programme he announced contained an element of intrinsic and healthy ambition. It revealed his conviction that to him was entrusted a mission to his country ; and perhaps, even at that early date, on looking about him and realizing the poverty of romantic literature, he saw himself as the predestined heir to a great spiritual inheritance—that of Alessandro Manzoni.

Both morally and intellectually Fogazzaro differed widely from Manzoni ; he was a romanticist of a different temper, of a different inner structure and formation, who, as it then seemed, would be but slightly influenced by those virtues of sobriety, chastity and jansenistic austerity which, after his conversion, had been the great teachers in art of one who wrote little, but whose writings are as enduring as bronze. Fogazzaro's personal sentiment inclined him to introduce into his novels all those elements which Manzoni, fully conscious of a higher ethical and æsthetical aim, had cast aside and trampled upon. Nevertheless, in a confused manner, the lesser light already felt the existence of an affinity between himself and the greater, which was destined, later on, to be made manifest through the most truly Italian, most truly Lombard, most truly Christian and most truly Catholic product of his artistic labours. As by a slender thread the old age of the one seemed connected with the youth of the other, and the Vicentine writer now turned with an ever-growing admiration towards this Master, with whom he was still unacquainted and whom, in the years of his early youth, he had failed to comprehend.

CHAPTER V

MALOMBRA

MALOMBRA may be looked upon as the poetical story of Fogazzaro's youth.

This statement will appear strange if taken as meaning that he had in any way participated in the fantastic adventure around which the long, crowded and complicated romance is woven; for Fogazzaro has given the dramatic event which is the subject of this species of prose-poem but a vague perspective, has allowed only the dim light of semi-wakefulness to play upon it, and has thus created conditions calculated to baffle any attempt to penetrate into the ill-defined world he has depicted, or discover any connection between its events and personal experiences of his own.

But if, instead of pausing to examine the conventional plan of the work, we endeavour rather to discover what I may call its under-currents, we shall soon be convinced that the material of which *Malombra* is composed is but a complex personal experience. In this, the first of his works of fiction, Fogazzaro has made his veiled confession. In Corrado Silla he has portrayed himself as he was at the approximate age of five-and-thirty. He has mirrored himself in this personage, going down into his own most confused depths, analyzing his most violent temptations, describing his various frames of mind—those that had preceded as well as those that had followed his conversion—treating them as so many phases of light and shadow. Corrado Silla is the portrait of Fogazzaro by himself. To be convinced of this one need but read his description of himself in one of the last pages of the unpublished autobiographical notes. "I was then suffering from a fever which at one moment was that of discouragement and at the next of heated passion. I passed through certain periods in which the life of my spirit became extinguished, as it

were, and all its fire passed into my senses. I struggled, fell, rose again, suffering acutely and heartily despising myself. I repeatedly besought the Almighty to send me a pure and noble passion that should rid me of this vile impurity.”¹ The first sketch in which Fogazzaro outlines the fundamental characteristics of Silla, corresponds with this auto-description. “A strange mixture of the material and of badly disciplined spirituality, he was subject to fits of spiritual ardour that aroused in him the most ideal, most ethereal of passions, but he was none the less subject to attacks of fever that degraded him to the lowest depths. He did not yield without a struggle, however. He had moments of literary inspiration, of literary ardour and of sinful ardour as well. One of his crosses was the fact that, while he had had the good fortune to know some ideal women, he had never been able to love any one of them. His genius at its highest urged him towards such passions as these. Then a change would take place. . . . Without chastity intellectual creation was impossible to him.”² / Like Silla, Fogazzaro’s aspirations were towards Truth, Beauty and Goodness. But in him as in the personage he had created, such aspirations were in never-ending conflict with other laws of his lower nature. / “My heart and my flesh,” he wrote some years later, recalling that period, “felt all the passions of humanity; my spirit felt the Almighty, felt a higher destiny admonishing it to soar aloft. But how often did it not falter in its flight and sink to earth, conscious of its own bitter loneliness, yearning for love, for a love that should be all purity! At such times the flesh triumphed over the spirit and there would ensue hours of sadness and of gloom in which the spirit no longer felt the Almighty, the ideal, nor even art itself; hours those of utter misery which are as spots of darkness on my inner life.”³ To the same person he wrote, concerning these tempests: “A passage in your letter leads me to suppose you are slightly acquainted with *Malombra*. I was not aware of this. I wish your eyesight would allow you to read a few pages near the end of the chapter entitled ‘In April,’ that deal with the moral tempests

¹ Unpublished autobiographical notes.

² From the grey copy-book.

³ Letter to E——, San Bernardino, July 14, 1883.

which tormented Silla. Instead of Silla's name you may read mine in those pages."¹

It is quite possible that in this poetic rendering of his moral lapses he may have exaggerated their importance. In fact, to the friend who had been afflicted by the perusal of that psychological description impregnated with a "gloomy voluptuousness," the real Silla wrote : "Reading them in the light of the last words of my letter you were alarmed by those chapters of *Malombra*. In my case such struggles and defeats concern my inner life only. Since my earliest youth, however, my will, which has not always been able to control my thoughts, has always controlled my actions and everything appertaining to my outer life. But how painful in the inner life are these defeats of the spirit ! How deadening they are to it, and how dumb they leave it ! "² It is certain, however, that he did not exaggerate the violence of his temptations. The conflict between flesh and spirit has seldom been so fierce in one of our own day as in the author of *Malombra*.

To the psychologist, then, *Malombra* offers a far more interesting point of view than the purely artistic. /The book is not exclusively a work of art ; it is the poetical story of the most stormy and sensuous period of its author's life. / In Corrado Silla he has described himself at a time when he found himself alone and on the brink of a dark and deadly chasm. Two species of sensualism of different temper and, it would seem, of different origin, exist in man. One is the lighter form that laughs, trifles with love and plays with women ; the other is that tragic species of the fallen angel which exists in all men most highly and richly endowed with passions ; it is at once a goad and a flame, a wing and a claw that rends ; it is a mighty thirst that can never be quenched with earthly delights ; an imperative need to live and possess ; a firebrand in that chaos of matter and spirit which is man. The sensualism that Fogazzaro knew, was of this description, capable of overwhelming all things, of reducing all to ashes. He was well aware that had he yielded at the moment when his fate hung in the balance, he, like Silla, would have been rushed on to utter ruin, to death itself, for the passion to which he would have

¹ Letter to E——, San Bastiano, August 5, 1883.

² *Ibid.*, Belvedere di Lanzo, August 20, 1883.

succumbed was a "furious current which one may never reascend, a current one must henceforth follow in pleasure as in pain, to whatever abyss it may lead, an abyss for which one would come to yearn the more ardently the greater its depth."

Beside Silla stands *Marina*. She also appears to reflect another aspect of Fogazzaro's spirit; she also may reveal to us some secret of the mind that created her.

"Before a word of the novel had been written," the author tells us, "Marina of *Malombra*, that fine, proud fantastic figure, already held me enthralled. I was enamoured of her and dreamed of making her reciprocate my love. To me she was the woman unlike all others, and I had cast her in a haughty mould, for the unspeakable delight of subduing her. *Marina* lived in me before *Edith*. She is that voluptuous feminine blending of graciousness, caprice, talent and pride that I had searched for with such longing in my early youth. She had become my dream in the place of another . . . of an ethereal creature resembling Chateaubriand's *Sylphide* of whom I had been deeply enamoured from the time I was twelve until I was sixteen. All that I have since read concerning love, as certain writers who proclaim themselves worshippers of beauty conceive it, seems but cold and insipid in comparison with the transports such a woman as *Marina* would have been capable of arousing in one worthy. The character then is a purely ideal conception, but one with a kernel of reality. *Marina* is the first of all the women whose traits I have chronicled in my works regardless of the effect they would produce and of what the public might think of them."¹

Marina is the fulfilment of the confused imaginings of that *Silla*, who in his early youth had dreamt of encountering one of those fine, imperious and terrible creatures born to overmaster and drag on to perdition itself, the man who stoops to examine the intricacies of their diseased souls.

In a sense *Marina* completes the description of *Silla*'s sensualism. She shows us that—before *Elena*'s light had flooded his horizon—Fogazzaro had thought of woman as a power of darkness—not as a *Beatrice*, but as a temptress. But of her

¹ *Minime*, by A. Fogazzaro, *Malombra*. Preface written for the *Figaro*, in whose columns a translation of the novel appeared in 1898.

author she has in her not only the sensualism of his hottest noon, but a certain confused spiritualism as well, which had played no small part in the moulding of his early sentiments; and this spiritualism of his it now behoves us to examine in order to discover in how far the heroine of *Malombra* was its exponent.

Fogazzaro was born a mystic, and was naturally inclined towards the invisible and transcendental. There were episodes in his childhood that clearly demonstrate this inborn attitude of his mind. For example, he himself tells us of a strange phenomenon of inner illumination, which he experienced in his early childhood in Valsolda.

“ I was sitting at sunset, on the grass near the cemetery at Oria, contemplating the blue and placid lake and the mountains beyond, all aflame with the glory of the sinking sun, and my heart was flooded with a profound sense of tenderness. All at once the thought came to me—sudden, vehement and clear—that in the objects around me in this lonely land I loved so well, there dwelt a Spirit, a living Being who understood me and loved me in return. I felt this presence so strongly that I could not possibly doubt its existence.”¹

Fogazzaro was convinced that this was no mere child’s fancy, but the direct experience of a reality, which as long as he lived he treasured as something sacred that might not be discussed with the uninitiated. He could never recall this incident without experiencing that religious emotion, amounting almost to perturbation, which inspired the beautiful verses of *Neovissima Verba*.

Nor was this the only inner experience of his childhood that had left in him a sense of a numerous category of unknown creatures and laws; of a veiled world whence come but a few vague echoes, a few rays of reflected light, some slight breath of unknown life, to illumine our dim twilight—like flashes from the great enigma on a cloudy mirror. In his lecture entitled “ Concerning a New Science ” there is a discreet allusion to another phenomenon of illumination which had impressed him deeply, and which he himself described to me. Every year, on their way from Vicenza to Valsolda, his family were in the habit of stopping at Bergamo. The house in which they lodged was

¹ Unpublished autobiographical notes.

one of those old mansions in the upper town whose windows looked out over encircling mediæval walls upon the radiant Lombard landscape stretching away to lose itself in an indistinct horizon that was the colour of the sea. One summer day the thoughtful child had gone out to the drawing-room balcony—a balcony of wrought iron over which a vine clambered, hiding it completely. From the room behind him his mother's voice and others that were familiar reached his ear. Suddenly he ceased to hear the voices and became rapt in an indefinable inner revelation. He had actually *seen* something of his future, had actually heard that one day his name would resound across that vast plain. The impression was so intense that, pale and trembling with a sense of awe, he instinctively withdrew from the balcony, with the feeling that a being outside of himself had, for a brief moment, lifted the veil that hides the future from us.

It is beyond doubt that, at the moment his sentiments were being moulded, a temperament such as Fogazzaro's must inevitably have been powerfully and definitely influenced by the dogmas of Paradise, Purgatory and Hell, and what was commonly called his "belief in spiritism"¹ was at bottom but his sensibility, both as a man and a poet, to those ties that bind us to the hidden world of spirits, precisely as his religion had predisposed him to sense them. A "spiritist" in the true sense of the word he never was. On this point we have his own explicit declaration, made to ~~Julio~~ Salvadori :

"I have always been an ardent spiritualist, and from my childhood have had a strong leaning towards mysticism; I believe that traces of this are to be found in everything I have written. It was but natural, therefore, that I should never jeer at the beliefs of spiritists. In substance such beliefs did not clash with my religious faith, and they are, moreover, in perfect harmony with an innate tendency of my spirit. I was, then, predisposed *a priori* to accept them, and eagerly seized an opportunity offered me by a friend who,

¹ For the sake of greater lucidity the translator uses the word "spiritism" in its Italian sense, that is, as denoting a belief in communication, by means of the medium, with those who have "passed beyond." (Translator's Note.)

through a process of reasoning, had himself come to accept them, although as yet he had had no personal experiences. I read several works on spiritism and am still connected with a Leipzig paper entitled *Psychische Studien*. But all this has not made me a spiritist in that sense in which the word implies the conception of and adherence to a new religion. I am convinced, by what I know of spiritism, that it is not all illusion and fraud, and that many phenomena do actually occur that cannot be explained by the natural laws with which we are acquainted. I am quite willing to believe that they are the work of an invisible intelligence, but I have failed to discover in them any light, any scientific, moral or religious revelation which stamps them as belonging to that higher world which the soul desires and hopes to attain. They are of infinite value as opposed to materialism and positivism, but absolutely valueless to one whose belief in the immortality of the soul rests upon a faith stronger and more noble than that derived through the senses.”¹

By reason of this faith Fogazzaro would never have sought a proof of the soul’s immortality through an artificial evocation of the dead; would never have attributed any religious importance to phenomena that touch our senses only and excite our baser curiosity. Nevertheless, after the death of his father, he could in all honesty write to his friend Boito as follows : “ I know that my father still lives beside me. I hear his voice that is more tender, more wise than ever. But believe me, I am no spiritist ! I simply possess the faith he himself held.”²

But although Antonio Fogazzaro was by no means a *spiritist*, it cannot be denied that, at one period, the clear waters of his Christian *spiritualism* became troubled by a form of morbid curiosity and vague sentimentalism. This is the period of his estrangement from the Church, when, having lost the real sense of Catholic philosophy, he allowed his fancy to lead him into the dim mazes of Oriental mysticism. He himself confessed as much when he said : “ Before I wrote *Malombra* I had been dwelling much on occultism. I had been fascinated by a strange philosophy in which Indian and Christian mysticism were blended. I had not been entirely convinced by this philosophy (at my heart’s

¹ Letter from Fogazzaro to Giulio Salvadori, October 23, 1882.

² *Ibid.*, A. Boito, Vicenza, May 14, 1887.

core there lay the seed of resistance), but I lived under its sway."¹ Although he was able to defend himself against the accusation of spiritism, he was unable to deny that he had believed in metapsychosis. There had been a moment in which his mind had felt the fascination of this solution of the great mystery of life. A vague religiosity dwelling perpetually upon the problem of personality may easily lead to a belief in reincarnation, especially when, like Fogazzaro, the subject is a keen student of every impulse of pain or pleasure that stirs within him; one who strains his ear to catch the slightest vibration of the spirit that may perhaps be a memory of a far-off world; one in whom the sense of pain and of justice is so strongly developed as to render the undeserved sufferings of this world inexplicable to him. It had been but a brief period of spiritual bewilderment, but it had produced *Malombra*. In *Marina* are reflected the spiritual temptations of Antonio Fogazzaro in his youth, as in *Silla* are reflected those of his senses. But Fogazzaro's inner experiences were sufficient to enable him to describe *Marina*'s state of mind with powerful insight, to analyse his own terrible doubt and to lead her finally to the verge of madness.

Be this as it may, however, it was while engaged in writing *Malombra* that its author had thrown off the influence of non-Christian spiritualism. In fact, beside *Marina* he has placed the gentle figure of Edith, and this with intention. "Edith is but the reaction of the religious conscience and sentiment; she was born of the terror of an abyss."² In her Fogazzaro wished to glorify the return of his re-acquired religious beliefs, by surrounding this pale and gentle daughter of the North with the fragrant poetry of holiness, in vivid contrast with the entralling but profane poetry in whose light her rival's violent spirit is revealed. She is the first truly religious character of Fogazzaro's creation, and her creator himself will one day discover in her those defects of immoderation generally to be found in characters born of reaction. But even as she is we are compelled to love her. She comes forward to meet us with the light step of a half-spectral being and the timid bearing of a vestal, to tell us that, if in the story, it was *Marina* who subjugated *Silla*, in life it was she her-

¹ *Minime*. Preface to *Malombra*.

² *Ibid.*

self, with her high and steadfast faith, who had triumphed over him.

Amongst Fogazzaro's works *Malombra* may well be termed the Prodigal of his art. Its author himself has said as much : " It possessed itself of everything I had in the house—ideas, passions, sufferings and memories—and went off to stake it all on a game of chance."¹ Against this background of exuberance and confusion the figure of a rising and powerful writer is already clearly defined—a writer prepared to lay hold upon the life of Italy with a new energy, a new determination.

It is in this volume, in fact, that Fogazzaro reveals the nature of the fundamental elements of his genius. The chapters entitled " The Red and Black Fan " are sufficient in themselves to give us the measure of his art which is capable of sensing, with the same intensity, the laughter and the sadness in all things, which knows melancholy and the realm of dreams, which can contemplate what is divine and scrutinize what is human. / In the Fogazzaro of *Malombra* there is not only a poet of nature and a passionate sentimentalist, there is a great humorist as well. // I cannot understand how those who praise the sense of the comic he displays in *The Patriot* have failed to admire the precious and no less pure vein of humour that runs through *Malombra*. / In this his first novel he parades before us a certain number of personages who are strikingly lifelike ; who have, moreover, founded families, and whose children and grandchildren appear in all of Fogazzaro's works. These ludicrous personages already reveal their author as a powerful creator of types, and prove the capacity of this star- and cloud-gazer for distinguishing what is real even in what is grotesque.

It has been said that he imitated Dickens. It is quite possible that the great English humorist, whom he read diligently and greatly admired in his youth, may have taught him to observe men and, above all, to copy nature both in the handling of plots and of souls ; nature wherein that which moves to laughter is but one aspect of that which moves to tears. We may well recognize the English as our masters in the careful delineation of

¹ *Minime.* Preface to *Malombra*.

the human character, and in this particular Walter Scott had already influenced Manzoni, whom he preceeded. /But Fogazzaro was original because he took all his characters from life instead of creating them artificially. Even the most eccentric are painted from life. He is, moreover, essentially Italian. / In my opinion he stands as a humorist, between Goldoni and Manzoni, just as he stands between the Venetian and Lombard worlds. But the century that lay between Goldoni and Fogazzaro had given the latter what De Sanctis has called "that divine melancholy which is the idealism of the poet of comedy," and which does not allow him to approach even the most grotesque personage without a complex and psychologically delicate sense of his humanity. Thus beside the Salvador family, beside Countess Fosca and Nepo —pure Venetian types fit almost to move upon the stage rather than in the pages of a novel—we find Steinegge, one of the most profoundly humorous of Fogazzaro's creations, because he is so perfectly human.

The whole gamut of Fogazzaro's humour is already contained in these characters, and they alone should suffice to secure him his place as a humorist in Italian literature, wherein so few have known how to laugh and jest without falling into licence.

The publication of *Malombra* was a decisive battle in Fogazzaro's career. He had reached an age—he was now thirty-nine—when it is impossible for one who has mistaken his way to retrace his steps, as he who discovers his mistake at twenty may do. The best part of his youth had been spent in learning to recognize his own individuality, and had fate condemned his first novel he might well have looked upon his life as a failure.

At that time Fogazzaro's state of mind was such that, had *Malombra* proved a failure, he would certainly have suffered a definite moral collapse. This explains his almost childish state of trepidation when, having finished his novel, he must find a publisher for it, and then await the judgment of the public. Among his papers I discovered a fragment of a diary in which he had described this anxiety of his, day by day. The diary proves of what supreme importance to his spiritual life was the result of the test this novel represented.

After many difficulties and much indifference on the part of a number of editors had been overcome, *Malombra* was finally published in May 1881, and the opinions expressed by its first readers immediately confirmed Fogazzaro's fervent hope that the book would produce a profound impression, thanks to its undeniable novelty and originality.

Soon the approbation of the general public was added to that of the author's intimate circle, but there was much adverse criticism and incomprehension as well.

To Alessandro Luzio, who had taken up the cudgels in his defence, Fogazzaro wrote: ". . . Unknown yesterday and destined perhaps to sink into oblivion again to-morrow, I shall, nevertheless, ever cherish the grateful memory of one who, without knowing me, and solely for the love of art, has deemed worthy of public praise and defence a work that contains so much of myself. . . ."

"Unknown yesterday and destined perhaps to sink into oblivion again to-morrow." A shade of bitterness still lurked in these words—a bitterness praise had not been able to destroy. He was conscious that he had written one of the best novels Italian literature possessed at that time; he was convinced that he had served art well in a field where it had long languished and where the labourers were few and poor in faith; but this consciousness, this conviction but rendered the public indifference to his book the more painful. Only a few of the choicest spirits recognized its true value. . . . The mass of Italian readers felt but little interest in a novel that failed entirely to cater to the prevailing tastes of the day—tastes impregnated with positivism, realism and fastidious scepticism. On the other hand, those prudent critics who prefer to follow in the wake of fame rather than to precede it, began to approach Fogazzaro with cautious tread, like Nicodemus in the shadow, without venturing to launch a favourable and open criticism. For these reasons, after the first favourable reception and a momentary success, Fogazzaro again experienced that sense of isolation and of an encircling silence that was growing ever deeper.

But in his proud isolation he now felt the strength to continue on his way, for he was encouraged by an inner voice. "I am

sure," he wrote, " that this neglect of me is unjustified and that, alive or dead, I shall one day occupy a place in our literature far above that of many who now enjoy a wider reputation than myself."¹ He had set to work again in a more manly spirit—had overcome the anguish with which he had challenged public judgment and yearned for fame. To do good work one must have acquired one's inner freedom by casting off those egoistical preoccupations which bind us to what is of the outer world. In the religious spirit that inspired him Antonio Fogazzaro had found strength to concentrate in himself, in the divine silence which the world's praise or blame may not break. He was mindful of his solemn promise to which he would henceforth remain faithful: "to serve Art and the Ideal, neither for the sake of fame nor of gain, but in fulfilment of a sublime duty."

¹ Letter to E——, Vicenza, February 21, 1884.

CHAPTER VI

THE NEW LIFE

IN the Villa Valmarana at Velo d'Astico there is a small room, the door-window of which opens upon the fields, and which has been described in *Daniele Cortis* as "Elena's little study." Antonio Fogazzaro cherished an especial predilection for this tiny workroom, through the jasmine and vine-embowered door of which his glance could follow every detail of the romantic valley's landscape, from the buzzing life amidst the grasses to the dolomite peaks soaring amidst a majestic and endless play of light and shadow—peaks now sanctified by the blood that has been shed upon them, and by memories of heroic deeds.

It was in this retreat, open only to the verdant silences, that, a few days after the publication of *Malombra*, Antonio Fogazzaro was "seized" (I use his own expressive term) by a fresh inspiration. He himself recorded the date of this decisive moment in his life by engraving it inside the drawer of his writing-table that contained his most sacred memories: "*Hyeme et estate*—Have begun to outline the novel—30. v. '81." And beneath he added: "*May 1881*—to create, still to create phantoms." Precious words for us who by their means may again pick up the thread of his inner life—words that usher in a middle period in his artistic career which is brought to a close by the brief note: "*March 11, '84, 3.30 P.M.*" At that very moment he had inscribed the word *Finis* at the end of the *Daniele Cortis* manuscript.

But the time that elapsed between these two dates—May 1881 and March 1884—held more than the writing of the novel. The *Cortis* years were the most fervent and impassioned of his life. They were decisive years for his soul.

It was during the last year of his work on *Malombra* that a higher ideal of the Christian life appeared to him as the road to be followed in pursuit of peace, and he resolutely set forth upon

it, spurred by an inner revulsion so strong that—exposed to their criticism in the following pages—it may well seem excessive to those to whom religion consists merely of a colourless routine of well-regulated and carefully weighed rites and precepts.

His conversion in the midst of the Euganean Hills¹ had represented in his life the passage from religious indifference to an emotional comprehension of Christianity; but this acceptance of Catholic truth had proved imperfect in practice, had failed to affect his passions and was not sufficiently strong to colour his artistic life as a whole. On this second occasion, however, he experienced above all the need of infusing his faith into his works, of making the heart and not the mind the centre of light, of renewing his being at the very roots of his inner life.

The mystic of three thousand years ago and the mystic of to-day both feel that human nature is neither perfect nor immutable, but rather that it is in a perpetual state of change, is in itself turbid, corrupt, full of suffering and of discrepancies, and that only the will to achieve a higher life through renunciation may co-ordinate and subjugate it. This was precisely the experience through which Antonio Fogazzaro passed while engaged in writing *Daniele Cortis*, through which he passed with all the honesty of purpose that distinguishes him from the tribe of self-styled mystics who appeared later on when the word *mysticism* had become the fashion. To him mysticism was at that time a struggle and a sacrifice; the ardent desire to prepare himself to receive the inspiration in all humility, as Pascal said. We have discovered a few brief pages in which Fogazzaro set forth his intentions and the main points to be observed in regulating his spiritual life. They throw a new light upon the heretofore unrevealed ascetic spirit of the author of *Daniele Cortis*. Here is a specimen :

“**PRAYER.**—*Sine intermissione orate.* Every moral and physical ill to be suffered in expiation. Mentally thank God for every comfort. Lift up the heart to Him frequently, if only for an instant.

“**STUDY.**—Must be well ordered and continuous.

“**APPETITE.**—Never satisfy completely the desire for food.

¹ Reference to a preceding chapter.—M. P. A.

“THOUGHTS.—Must be carefully guarded.

“READING.—Always the works of the great. Lord, grant your servant the virtue he so entirely lacks, that having determined to abide by your law he may have the strength to persevere ! —January 26, 1880.”

But it is in the following fragment of a private diary that the dramatic religiousness of the man is most clearly revealed, the soul of one perpetually tormented by a sense of his own moral infirmities, perpetually watching every slightest impulse of his heart, with an agonizing sensibility to evil.

FROM THE DIARY

(*Undated*) Spring of 1883.—Gifts received : easy circumstances, genius, a sufficiently healthy body, good examples, a religion, a family, children ! Rank ingratitude. I offer Thee, O Lord, every bodily pain, every spiritual humiliation. Let me suffer in my body, let my work be ignored and my name perish in oblivion, if I may but be made pure in Thy sight. O my soul, art thou sincere ?—Yes, for I can contemplate the hour of my death and rest content, if this may be.

March 4.—Ezek. xxxiv. ver. 16. (The return to goodness.) How sweet is the moment when the soul, forsaking evil, again begins to hope in God and adore Him ! How sad is the morrow of sin ! And why is its memory never sufficient ? My soul is as wayward as were the people of Israel ; ever visited by the Lord, but ever forgetting and denying Him ! I have reached a most difficult point in my work ; I am aware of defects in the canvas ; at times I feel I shall never be able to continue ; my heart is sad and bitter. O Lord, I offer Thee these moments in expiation !

March 9.—I am thinking of the lonely grave, wherein my body will rest and suffer corruption. O Lord, Lord ! Save Thou my soul ! And thou, dull soul, awake to understanding !

March 10.—Last night I listened to a tempest ; for a moment I felt as if it was about to whirl me aloft in its course, and all my nerves tingled. O Lord, no, no ! I know well that this would not be happiness. Last night I was able to pray calmly, kneeling at my little son’s bedside.

April 5.—Involuntarily I resent the high praise and literary success that certain works obtain that I feel are not better than my own. This is a sentiment that must be striven against. Let us rejoice at the success of others, when they achieve fame and

gain. Even though but few take heed of me, though my work yield me nothing, I must struggle onwards for art's sake and in obedience to God who created me for this. To Him I offer every grievance. But I experience great difficulty in banishing the desire for worldly recompense from my heart ; in this very offer I am conscious of the hope of propitiating the Almighty and obtaining worldly recompense. This is wrong. Rather let us contemplate the splendours of the future state : austere peace of conscience.

April 8.—Existimo enim quod non sunt condigneæ passiones, etc.

*April 12.—*Last night I dreamt such dreams as I used to dream in early youth ; that I could raise myself up into the air by a spiritual impulse of faith and love.

*May 3.—*Casanova, to whom I wrote some days ago, has not yet replied. (C. is the editor in Turin who, Giacosa assured me, would certainly be willing to bring out the poems and novel. I wrote to him several years ago concerning a second edition of *Miranda*, but my letter remained unanswered.) I fear he will not reply. Another hope dashed, another light extinguished ! I have recently been revising *Valsolda*, correcting and re-writing. It does indeed seem to me to contain, here and there, touches of true and affecting poetry. But to what purpose have I reviewed it ? I am returning to prose, to the novel which will probably meet the same fate. And I am resuming my task with a heart full of bitterness, but determined to conquer, nevertheless. To God I offer this bitterness of heart.

May 20.—Washed.¹ What intense delight I experienced ! I render thanks to God ! How well one rests in Him, how gently does He soothe all wounds, all pain !

*May 22.—*A satisfactory letter has arrived from C. O man of little faith ! I am comforted and grateful. But herein lies a *fresh danger*. How can this be ?

Simultaneously with the work of inner purification, of which these fragments from a diary mark the phases, Fogazzaro was experiencing a secret fever of meditation, of work and of reading. We have seen among his resolutions that to read only the writings of the great. Fogazzaro was surfeited with the mass, but he hungered for those rare works whose authors seek truth rather

¹ This word is written in English. Does it perhaps mean purified by prayer or religious devotions ? (Translator's Note.)

than artistic effect ; those wherein poetry springs from real life as one of the forces of nature, albeit neither well ordered, polished nor composed according to the acknowledged rules of scholarship. Of profane as of sacred literature he demanded that it enable him to draw deeper breaths of the human and of the divine—and that only. He had, therefore, set about a re-perusal, in the original, of the Greek classics, especially of Homer and the tragic poets. He also delighted in popular poetry, that perennial source of fundamental sentiment. He was at this time devoting much profound study to the works of the great Christian mystics, especially those of Malebranche, which influenced him very definitely. But his favourite book, and one that was to remain his companion through life, was the *Bible*—that mighty sacred poem, all aglow with the light of its occult and anonymous author.

There exists a notebook in Fogazzaro's hand wherein are jotted down certain extracts and brief comments which reveal the spirit in which he was studying the Scriptures, seeking spiritual sustenance in their pages. At that period it was with but a superficial knowledge of criticism and all unprepared by any previous study of the comparative history of religions that he approached the *Bible*, but he was possessed of a profound mystic intuition that helped him to an understanding of the unique character of that song of waiting that follows a people from the creation to the fulfilment of the covenant.

But Fogazzaro was not only a poet, he was a true believer as well ; and in the *Bible* the believer sought God. At every step the critic may find subject for doubt, and innumerable obscurities in this book, which is as a torrent that has swept along, in its rush through the centuries, the gold and the dross of endless generations. But to Fogazzaro only the main stream of divine inspiration was visible. He read in it the sacred story of God in His descent towards the least as towards the greatest of His creatures, and of humanity in its ascent towards the Creator.

At the outset God is represented as the invisible and solitary habitant of the skies, the Lord of tempests to whom man offers bloody sacrifices upon rough altars of stone. He is the Spirit who speaks to Moses out of the burning bush, who thunders

forth His laws amidst the terrors of the storm, who is unknown and hostile to the other peoples of the earth. But little by little, through the slow ascension of the soul of man, his conception of God is purified. Man soars towards the light, and the light enters into him. The Terrible One reveals Himself the Holy One. He no longer speaks from the mountain-top, nor from the midst of a flaming bush, but out of the depths of the heart of man by the mouth of His prophets and His elect. "To what purpose," He cries, "is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me? . . . *Plenus sum*" (Isa. i.)—words grand in their realism, that inspired Fogazzaro. This God of the prophets will accept no material sacrifices, nor have the blood of animals shed for Him, but demands a new incense, a new ritual, of which the temple must be the body and the soul of man, and the altar his pure heart. "*Lavamini, mundi estote, auferte malum cogitationum vestrarum ab oculis meis . . . discite benefacere . . .*" (Isa. i.). It is still, in a sense, the anthropomorphous God who speaks, but "the divine nature of this passion," Fogazzaro exclaims, "could not be more dazzlingly revealed." On the other hand, the heart of man, becoming purified, yearns with ever-growing intensity for God; it lays itself open to Him and eagerly awaits His coming until He finally descends into it and makes it His abode. The Old Testament is the story of the time of waiting; the New Testament is the story of the descent. The two worlds meet in Jesus Christ. The God of Wrath, upon whom none might look and live, is become the meek and humble Son of man, whose words are love and forgiveness. He before whom man, casting off his sandals, once prostrated himself in the dust in sign of adoration, kneels before His disciples and bathes their feet, to show that only by serving his brother can man hope to become like unto God. The Invisible Spirit still remains, indeed, but no longer hidden in the skies. The Invisible Spirit now dwells in this mortal flesh, that bears all the world's sufferings. And the symbol that closes the epic of God is composed of two pieces of wood forming a cross upon which two human arms are stretched in martyrdom.

Judging from his transcripts, his notes and comments, it was the fascination of tracing out these main lines that rendered the

study of the holy book so engrossing to Fogazzaro; and these studies did most certainly exert a permanent influence upon his mind. The Bible remained ever, to the very end of his days, the true source of his religious inspiration.

But the religious influence which proved most decisive was not exerted by a book, but by another soul. Precisely at that time there took place his meeting with a woman—a meeting destined to decide the nature of his faith and of his art. It was Elena entering his life. She came to him asking not for love, but for a religion she had lost and for which she was still seeking. It was the first time such a demand had been made upon him, and that his duty as a missionary appeared to him closely connected with his vocation as an author. Up to that moment his faith had been a personal experience, shut up within himself, the torment and consolation by turns of himself alone. In asking him for light his petitioner was not only forcing him to emerge from the barren solitudes of his own emotional nature and place himself in contact with reality, but was obliging him also to descend ever deeper into himself in search of light, to dig to greater depths, to subject his conscience to a searching examination in regard to his attitude towards Catholicism.

The letters which form the secret treasure offered to that soul, and which death has placed in our hands, form, therefore, a most precious contribution towards a thorough understanding of what Fogazzaro really thought and believed while writing *Daniele Cortis*. / Fogazzaro the believer is all here, and it is of extreme interest to us to know him as he really was, the better to penetrate the meaning of his romance and to comprehend the true nature of the souls of *Daniele* and *Elena*. / Here we come upon the deepest and most sacred roots of their beings, and many aspects of their psychology that may appear obscure in the book, are made clear to us by this revelation of a great and true belief, which, we cannot fail to see, differs widely from a mere literary experiment.

Let the letters speak for themselves; we give them without comment; and may there emerge from them a more faithful portrait of Fogazzaro, one drawn by his own hand in this con-

fession to a woman, one that forms part of the truer romance of his own soul, which he never wrote.

EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS TO ELENA

October 3, 1883 (Evening).—You have written thus to me : “If Christ be indeed God as I once believed, and not a being near to God as I now conceive Him to be, will He pardon me for worshipping Him differently ? for seeking to follow in His footsteps, while deliberately ignoring the mysteries ? And how is it that I have felt God so surely present in my heart, have been able to enjoy His peace after all my struggles, if indeed I have lapsed from truth into error ? May it not be that your way of worshipping God is suited to your needs, while mine demand a different way ? ”

Neither I nor any one else in the world dare say : Christ will not pardon. Not for any consideration would I relinquish this consoling hope. But may one who does not believe in Christ’s divinity count upon His pardon if he be mistaken ? I am bound to answer unhesitatingly, no—he may not. He who does not believe in the divinity of Christ loves Him with but a poor love, loves Him imperfectly and offers Him a devotion that you or I, were we Christ, would indignantly reject. If Christ be not God then there is much of the impostor about Him, and he who believes Him to be human only, brings this charge against Him. There must then be imposture in His words, in the miracles by which He affirmed His own divinity, by which He inspired His disciples who so loved Him with a faith so ardent that they were willing to die for it. When, at the Last Supper, He addressed words of sublime affection to them, saying : “Ye believe in God, believe also in Me,” who but a cold and proud spirit would have replied : “I love thee, thy teachings are true and holy, but thou art not the Son of God as thou sayest ; thou art not an impostor perhaps, but thou labourest under a delusion ; thou art the victim of circumstances and of human vanity ; thou hast an excellent heart, but a weak head.” Christ will not accept such love as this.

After all, my friend, you repudiate the divinity of Christ for no other reason than that it is beyond the grasp of your intelligence, or, in other words, because you cannot comprehend how it can be that God’s majesty is not thereby depreciated. This also constitutes an act of pride which is contrary to the love of Christ. He who truly loves does so with his whole being,

with his intellect as well as with his heart ; he accepts as truth from the object of his affections, things that pass his understanding and which may even seem paradoxical. Christ felt and indirectly pointed out this obstacle which His faith was bound to encounter in the cold pride of human nature. He says to us : "Learn of Me ; for I am meek and lowly in heart." And again He says : "Blessed are the meek." He addressed Himself by preference to the humble, the simple and to little children, as if to admonish us to be simple, humble and as little children in His presence.

I must lay stress upon this point, my friend—this lack of love which is the cause of your incredulity. I have but touched upon it, because I can do no more in this short time ; but there are a thousand reasons which might be averred why the human mind should not repudiate truths it is incapable of comprehending, a thousand things to be said concerning the mysteries which must be in God, concerning the apparent obstacles which are cast in our way by the imperfections of human language, by our habit of judging everything according to our human standard. The word *Son*, for example, evokes a conception which seems incompatible with that of divinity. We presume to question the miracles, while we are entirely ignorant concerning the manner in which mind may affect matter ; we deem it impossible that God may be incarnate in a human being, while we are willing to grant (as do you yourself) that each one of us may become divine. If one day we may become divine, it is only logical to admit that we are that already, for the finite cannot become infinite. You deny the divinity of Christ and, almost, it would seem, as a punishment, are led into the absurdity of admitting the divine element in all mankind. You may answer by declaring that you have not studied logic and are no philosopher. Yet you have, nevertheless, had recourse to a logic and a philosophy of your own to justify your denial and repudiation of a lofty conception, a grand conception, and one which is accepted by master-minds. Why, then, if your logic and philosophy are incapable of creating, should they be capable of destroying ?

. . . As for your question concerning the divine peace which you feel within you and which leads you to conclude that you have cast aside error rather than lapsed into it, I find it impossible to reply without distressing you ; but much as it pains me to do so, I cannot omit to answer. When, in all honesty, one seeks for truth, the very effort put forth by the soul fills it with a sense of vitalizing warmth which has misled

many as to the real value of beliefs lost or of those acquired. The conviction that one has found truth, that one is at peace with God, helps to maintain this warmth. The most materialistic of atheists experience such moments of inward glow and of consolation which are but the outcome of their conviction that they have indeed arrived at the truth. There is no form of faith so absurd but there may be found those eager to die for it, and the argument that Christianity has had a host of martyrs is the last that should be adduced in its favour. But it is to be presumed that God will call upon us for the reasons that have led us to doubt or to believe, and I do not think the fact that we have "believed His presence had filled our hearts" will carry much weight. Perhaps in some cases—in many cases—He may reply: "But at first you struggled while I was pleading in your heart for the old faith against your pride. You fought God Himself. You would not listen to My voice, and at last, to your sorrow, I was still, leaving you to your delusion that you were at peace with Me, to the false raptures from which you are now awakened. The natives of India who cast themselves beneath the ear of Juggernaut experience a similar divine enthusiasm, a similar sense of inward peace, but that does not prove that they possess the truth."

I who speak to you derive from my faith all the ardour and consolation that are experienced by one who believes he is doing what is pleasing to God. I have had no moments of ascetic exaltation for a long time, but I assure you that I have experienced in the practice of the Catholic religion certain spiritual ecstasies that were indeed superhuman, and certain inward transports that seem to me to constitute irrefutable arguments in favour of Catholicism. How would you explain these things?

You are in good faith, my friend; but will you still be in good faith if, disregarding my arguments and those of others far more competent than I, you neglect to study and to meditate deeply, and seek instead to lull your spirit to rest in its present state? No, you would no longer be acting in good faith, and I am convinced that your peace of mind would be disturbed thereby.

Finally, the distance that separates our beliefs is too great to admit of the possibility of our worshipping God each in his own way and as best suits his nature. "He who confesses Me before all men, him also will I confess in the presence of the angels," says Christ. For me to confess means to *recognize My divine nature and mission*. The Jews said of Christ as you say:

"He is a prophet"; but His disciple said: "I believe that Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God." To this Christ made answer: "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven." It would be all too easy to acknowledge that Christ was a great Man and that His teachings are sublime!

If I be in error surely it is more probable that my excess of faith will be pardoned than your want of faith, if it prove to be you who are in error, for faith in itself is good; it is an impulse towards God. Nevertheless, although my faith is more complete, I do not believe myself to be nearer God than you are. God is love, St. Paul tells us, and love is greater than faith. Now, there is a nobler and more lofty love of God in you than in me, because you possess a finer nature, and although you speak of my faith as rich, it is rich only in what is of slight account. I feel your superiority not with a sense of envy, but of joy, and I fear I have been too harsh in saying that your peace of heart is perhaps nothing but an illusion. I remember that you once moved me to tears when you declared that even in hell you could rest content, in the consciousness that you were there by God's will. When I think of that I feel myself very far beneath you. It is by no merit of my own that I am a fervent believer, for I was brought up by persons imbued with a pure and exalted faith. . . .

I have put my soul into this letter.¹

October 19, 1888 (Evening).—I understand your aspiring towards good for good's sake, without thought of reward. That word *reward* is not a fine word, and I think we could do very well without it and without the idea it embodies. *To aspire to good* means *to seek to draw nearer to God*, or simply to love God in thought and act. And what sort of a love is it that seeks a reward outside itself, that fails to find it in itself? The Catholic Church teaches (with regard to Penitence) that the most perfect, most noble suffering is that which disregards the penalty; thus the most perfect, most noble love of God must be that which disregards the reward. Up to this point your way of thinking is entirely Catholic.

October 26, 1883.—The Euganean Hills are looming blue through the morning's golden mists. Every morning I read a little in the New Testament, and often open the book at random

¹ Of these unpublished letters the most significant passages only have been chosen, while those of a strictly personal character have been omitted.

after praying God to speak to me from its pages. I had been thinking of you, of the struggle that is going on within you, and then after praying with my whole soul, I opened the book. My eyes fell upon the eighth chapter of the Gospel according to St. John, and precisely upon the twenty-second verse, where I began to read the dialogue between Christ and the unbelievers. I read as far as the thirtieth verse. These verses contain some terrible words ! “ . . . Except ye believe that I am *He*, ye shall die in your sins.” “ They perceived not that He spake to them of the Father.” But at the end there are these words of consolation : “ As He spake these things many believed on Him. . . . ” You have begun to believe—believe without reserve.

October 29, 1883 (Morning).—Here is the dawn, a dawn that is peaceful, full of joy and of hope. Oh, tell me, my friend, that in your soul also the day is dawning, with a light that soars aloft ! Tell me that Christ is risen. . . .

Montegalda, October 31, 1883.—Here is my soul laid bare, and my faith !

I am a Catholic, I intend to remain a Catholic, and I hope to die in the bosom of the Catholic Church, comforted by her sacraments and by the sublime words she speaks to the dying, among which are these : “ *Ignorantias eius quæsumus ne memineris, Domine.* ” “ Lord, remember not his errors.” I am a Catholic, and I believe I can be one without identifying myself in all things with those you have called *Pharisees*, of whom I can but say that, if they are in good faith, I respect them ; if they are not, I pity them. With you and more than you, I deplore the abuses of excommunication, and what you so aptly term, all the *worldliness* with which it is saturated. I will judge no one, for this Jesus forbids, but I perceive as clearly as you do all the evil that has been wrought by the clergy, from the Popes downwards ; no decree issued at Rome will ever persuade me that certain books, such as Antonio Rosmini’s *The Five Wounds of the Church*, are civil. I honour and recognize as better than I am, those simple souls to whom, for example, the recital of the rosary is prayer ; but I feel at perfect liberty, nevertheless, to pray in my own way, perfectly free to disapprove in my heart and, in some cases, in words, of certain effeminate, false, futile, I would almost say repugnant forms of devotion which have crept into the Catholic Church. I deplore all exaggerations in the worship of the saints, although I believe in the power of these spirits who have been the authors of good, as also in the relations that may exist between them and

ourselves, and I recognise the natural impulse to commune at times with these our brothers beyond the grave, who are with God. I regret that the great saints of Catholic thought—St. Augustine, St. Thomas, St. Bonaventura, St. Jerome and many others—are too little known and honoured. I believe in the benefit to be derived from the sacraments if they be approached, not from habit, but in response to an impulse of the heart. I detest all intolerance, that petty formalism in which many would imprison the religious sentiment. When, for instance, I hear zealous Catholics speak uncharitably of those who are lax in the observance of the decrees concerning abstinence and fasting, my soul revolts, not against the Catholic Church, but against her ministers and writers, who have thus misled consciences, who are so out of tune with the spirit of Christianity. I myself may perhaps have suffered therefrom, for if there is one point in my religious opinions on which I am not entirely easy it is that of forbidden foods, because I fear to esteem this precept of the Church too lightly, precisely because I have so often seen and heard an irritating importance attributed to it. Perhaps I am wrong in this. It is a fact that voluntary privations of this sort strengthen the spirit.

The Pharisees ! It was against those formalists, devoid of charity, that Christ hurled denunciation. Let us pity them, my friend, and pray for them ; for if they be not in good faith, their burden of guilt is a heavy one. They are Christians in name only, they belong to the Catholic Church but in appearance, even though they be amongst the pontiffs ! But by what power can they prevent our belonging to it ? To be Catholics we have no need of them. I may find myself in personal contact with them in church, but my spiritual independence of them is absolute.

Montegalda, November 8, 1883 (Evening).— . . . “ Whosoever is not against me is with me.” It is true that in chapter ix. of the Gospel according to St. Mark, and in chapter ix. also of that according to St. Luke, the words are : “ He that is not against *you* is for *you*. ”¹ You can surely perceive the importance of this passage and the difference. Up to the present you are really against the disciples and against the Church, because you have rejected and still deny its authority, and by those words Christ indirectly confirms the authority of the Church. Consequently the passage is not in your favour. Together with others con-

¹ In the English version the end, both in St. Mark and St. Luke, is *us.* (Translator's Note.)

tained in the Gospels, this passage expressed the strong solidarity that exists between Christ and His Church, a solidarity which makes it impossible to accept one and reject the other.

The body of the Church is diseased. Alas! yes, seriously diseased, I well know how seriously, and not so much because the mass of the faithful are unworthy, which is but natural, as because such a large part of humanity, perhaps the entire human part of religion, is grown old, is worn out, is in desperate need of Catholic reform. Antonio Rosmini, who was a holy priest, the founder of a religious order, one of the most powerful philosophers of our century, and who is still held in veneration by that portion of the clergy which is not jesuitical, wrote of the ills of the Church, but failed indeed to enumerate them all. One, for instance, is the exclusion of living languages from the ritual; another is the insufficient, I would even say the bad education imparted to the priesthood; a third is the temporal power of which we still feel the evil effects although it no longer exists; and there are many others it would take too long to name. But does the fact that the Church is ill constitute a good reason for forsaking her? Does it constitute a good reason for relinquishing the sound and eternal truths that were confided to her keeping, and whose possession entitles her alone to be called *holy*? Should we forsake our country because it is ill-governed, because of its many bad laws and bad citizens? No, no, my friend. Let all who have the strength to struggle, pray that God may free from disease the body of that Catholic Church which is dear to us and holy, not because of the human beings who compose and govern it, but because of Christ who founded it.

November 9 (Morning).—My friend, the Catholic religion consists more of charity than of faith. “God is love,”¹ St. Paul tells us. If charity is but poorly practised in the Church, rather blame men for this and not the religion. Do not say, do not believe that my heart is full of charity; it is often sterile, often too prone to submit to a spirit inclined towards sarcasm and irony. Nevertheless this ill-disposed spirit of mine knows and treasures the Christian precept to love all men, the just and the unjust, because God, who is our ideal, causes the sun to shine and the rain to fall on the just and the unjust alike. Do you truly sense, my friend, Christ’s injunction to love all our brethren, even those who seem to us most unworthy of affection? It is an injunction that it is difficult to put into practice, as difficult for

¹ In the Italian version the words are “Dio è carità” (God is charity). (Translator’s Note.)

me as for you, but how can we follow in His footsteps if we do not seek to love all men ?

November 11.— . . . It always pains me to read those three words, “ My cowardly heart.” Do not thus stigmatise your heart because it looks forward to a future of love, and is in a tumult, crying out and demanding it. Do you not see that one cannot love God without the desire, the hope of being united to Him in all eternity ? Your spirit seeks to be something more than human, to pray only that the Lord’s will be done. Christ Himself did not pray thus ; He prayed with the naturalness of the simple, humble human being. “ Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me ; nevertheless not My will, but Thine be done.” He also teaches us to pray for our own happiness. “ Father, let us rejoice one day ; let us rejoice together if that be possible. But Thy will be done.” Is not this a holy prayer ? It is indeed both holy and human, and worthy of the heart God has given us, worthy also of the Christian law which enjoins upon us the duty of “ loving Him and loving one another.”

You ask me if I will teach you to hope. Not I but God Himself will teach you ; indeed you already hope. Sometimes you say as much, and sometimes I feel it. You wonder if God sent His Son to many planets. No, the Redemption is one only. I, who believe in the plurality of inhabited worlds, have always held that, as upon earth Christ chose the humblest of spots and surroundings in which to be born, so also He chose one of the lesser planets of the universe. Moreover, St. Paul tells us in chapter i. of the Epistle to the Colossians : “ For it was the good pleasure of the Father that in Him (the Son) should all fulness dwell ; and through Him to reconcile all things unto Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross ; through Him, I say, whether things upon the earth or things in the heavens.”

The Inquisition troubles you and a phrase of Gratry’s offends you. But, after all, what does Gratry say ? “ It is expedient that there be those in the Church whose task it is to examine new religious doctrines and, when necessary, warn the faithful of their falsity.” Beyond that there is neither the penalty of death by fire nor of persecution. The use of those weapons was indeed a horrible crime. Is not this sufficient to satisfy any one ? It seems so to me. But I fear you always start from the same false premise that the Church calls herself *holy* in reference to her body, for the qualities possessed by the members of her hierarchy, and by those who govern her. No, the Church is holy only by virtue of the truth of the Faith she teaches, of the authority she

received direct from Christ and the Apostles, of the divine promise that the gates of hell shall not prevail against her. The Catholic Church was always holy (*sancta* means recognized, or legitimate) even when monsters of corruption sat upon St. Peter's throne ; even when she was destitute alike of morality and of faith, as an illustrious Italian said, in speaking of the dark era that preceded the coming of that great healer of Catholicism, o that divine instrument, Martin Luther. You condemn Rome for the Inquisition ; I condemn her for her attachment to the temporal power, and we can both speak loudly and frankly on these points and yet remain good Catholics.

Montegaldà, November 13, 1883 (Evening).—There is such joy in my heart, such pure joy, such ardent joy, that it fills my whole being with warmth, and exalts me ! It must shine in my eyes, it must ring in my voice ! And all for a word, a clear, sweet, eternal word . . . “ I yield.” How I have thanked God to-night ! My soul was flooded with gratitude as soon as the word was uttered, but I needed to be alone, and when I reached my room I poured all this joy out before the Lord. “ We are united,” I cried, “ we are united, Father, in Thy hands ! ” I seized my dear Bible, opened it twice at random without finding anything that seemed to bear upon the case, but the third time I opened it my glance fell upon this verse in St. John : “ And it was the Sabbath day when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes.” Can it be that I was that clay ?

Thus does this handful of letters describe the singular and sacred drama of two consciences in which one yields to the ardent faith of the other. They mark one of the great moments in Antonio Fogazzaro's spiritual life—his meeting with Elena. The episode forms the true beginning of his New Life.

CHAPTER VII

DANIELE CORTIS

EVERY episode in which a woman is concerned has a complex action on the psychology of the man. Antonio Fogazzaro's mystical friendship with Elena had renewed, fortified and refreshed him, and left him with a sense of manly vigour and a spirit rejuvenated. His private letters are full of this "new and great strength."¹ To his delight he felt it flooding his whole being. "I am much younger than I was then," he wrote, referring to the Miranda period. "This afternoon, while walking with Gina and Mariano among these hills so gloriously illumined by the rays of the setting sun, I was actually inebriated with fire and light; it was as if my feet did not rest upon the earth, and I talked to Gina at random of art, nature and religion, with a vehemence and warmth of emotion that astonished her."² At times it seemed to him he had reached the zenith of his life, the very noon-tide of his summer, that his whole being was flooded with the light of God. The sun was shining brightly for him; the simple thoughts that came to him were such as he could serve and love; he even became indifferent to criticism.

When Fogazzaro began to write *Daniele Cortis* there was perhaps still about him something of the vanity of the man of letters. Religious meditation and communion with the pure and ardent spirit of a woman had separated him from all secondary and baser considerations, strengthening him in devotion to the main business of life, and he was now able to bring the intellect of the eager and militant believer to bear upon the artistic creation he had in hand—the intellect of one to whom the writing of a book is a battle that must be fought. He himself tells us that :

"According to the original plan, my novel would have

¹ Letter to E——, August 20, 1883. ² *Ibid.*, Velo, October 13, 1883.

had a happy ending. The other day I altered this solution and now feel more satisfied with it. The first arrangement would have pleased a greater number of readers, but the second will satisfy the choicer spirits, and it is their judgment alone that counts with me. In this novel of mine I am dealing with both love and politics in the most unpopular manner possible. I am glorifying a form of passion that is no longer the fashion, that is even considered ridiculous, and expressing political views which many may indeed hold in secret, but which no one dares to assert openly for fear of incurring unpopularity. It is quite possible that Folly chastised, as Silla would have chastised her, may salute me with cries of *Bravo!* But so rich am I in faith and love that it matters little to me how I am received.”¹

In fact, Fogazzaro stood alone in literature, and there was every reason to foresee that *Daniele Cortis* would serve but to increase his isolation. During the four years that separated the work from *Malombra* he had made no attempt to acquaint himself with the tastes of the public. French realism had not affected him in the remotest degree. His favourite books were works of other days, yellowed with age and practically forgotten. The world of sentiment in which he was most at home was less far removed from that of *René* and *Werther* than from that of his own contemporaries. But, surrounded by provincialism as he was, passing his days within the four walls of the quiet home, devoting himself to the education of his three children, going forth of an evening through the streets of the little marble city to stroll beneath the horse-chestnut trees of the Campo Marzio and commune with the moon, he had been doing far better than study the tastes and opinions of others. He had lived the life of his own spirit, lived intensely all that he really loved, all that he really believed. For this reason he was destined to exert that influence which those alone may wield who come out of solitary places and who, in their solitude, have laid up rich treasures of poetry. And *Daniele Cortis* was a triumph!

Better than any other Giuseppe Giacosa has described and borne witness to the immense impression this book—which came as a revelation—produced in the realm of literature.

¹ Letter to E——, Montegaldà, November 12, 1883.

“ *Daniele Cortis* is pursuing its triumphal way,” he wrote to Fogazzaro. “ No one can read the book without becoming enthusiastic over it. I myself have read it twice with the greatest enjoyment. I heard Verga exclaim while poring over it : ‘ This is not only Italy’s leading novelist, this is one of *the very finest in European literature* ! ’ In case you should fail to grasp his meaning let me explain that the first ‘ this ’ refers to my friend Antonio Fogazzaro of Vicenza, and the second to his new novel. . . . I am really overjoyed for you, my friend, and for your daughter as well, to whom, if it reach her, the echo of this noble and well-deserved success must afford a satisfaction more subtle and delicate than any we mere men can appreciate. And I am also overjoyed for my country, for, when a work like *Daniele Cortis* pleases, it is a sign that the nation’s fibre is still sound and healthy, for the book seems written for the express purpose of discouraging demagogues of whatever description. It was but just that you should have your day. When I used to contemplate the cheap successes of our times and think of you, practically ignored, like any second-rate scribbler, I was entirely at a loss to understand the reason for this neglect. I am thankful for the present act of tardy justice.”¹

In the first place, we must subject the subject and characters of this new novel to close examination. One thing will impress us at the outset, namely, the difference between *Daniele Cortis* and *Corrado Silla*. In the later novel the inner drama, the secret struggle between spirit and flesh, which was a part of Fogazzaro’s own life experience, is continued and developed indeed, but upon a higher plane. The poem of temptation unrolls itself in a more spiritual atmosphere. In *Malombra* Silla had only the lusts of the flesh to contend against, and it was through his own weakness that he was whirled along in a storm of sensuality which finally engulfed him. In the work that followed, on the contrary, the hero must stand firm not only against carnal lusts but against true passion as well; not only must he subdue the flesh but all those purest, strongest and most persistent voices as well, that cry out in the heart of a man for the one woman he truly loves.

Daniele is at the high tide of his manhood; he is man upon

¹ Letter from Giuseppe Giacosa to Antonio Fogazzaro, Colleretta Parella February 12, 1885.

the threshold of his summer, and in him life, freed from the impurities of which he himself confesses to have drunk deeply in the turbulent years of his youth, is now exalted by action and endeavour. / He is not a poet like Silla. He holds political and religious convictions in defence of which he has taken up arms ; he stands for ideas which but few will adopt ; he is the lonely champion of a party destined to have no followers. But he is passing through the hour when, like Fogazzaro, he is so rich in love that he is indifferent to success. / In the political campaign he is about to initiate in Italy he feels himself supported from the outset by a hidden source of strength and light—Elena. /

/ Elena is in all ways worthy of Daniele. She does not possess his faith, but all else that is noble in him is hers as well. Hers is not a mystic soul, for she is beset by many of the same doubts that tormented the unknown lady to whom Fogazzaro was writing letters on religion at the time. Like her sister in real life, she has no sense of personal immortality nor of a merciful and divine fatherhood. / But her moral structure has its own austere grandeur which makes her appear superior to Daniele, because she seeks no reward for sacrifice accomplished and looks forward to no compensation, either temporal or eternal, for duty fulfilled. She is, above all, a magnificent type of the woman who has kindled an ardent passion, but who is pure with the purity of a clearly burning fire, intolerant of all vulgarity, intolerant even of the word or gesture that is unchaste, but ready to give herself freely, ready to merge her own individuality in the man she loves, to make him the one law of her being, even though she violate those laws that bind her to another.

As if to intensify this occult attraction towards each other of two noble souls drawn together by an ineradicable spiritual affinity, is the moral inferiority of those whose lives are bound up with theirs. By surrounding them with darkness Fogazzaro has sought to make his hero and heroine shine more brightly, sought to throw their moral beauty into higher relief against a background of despicable humanity. Signora Fiamma and Baron di Santa Giulia have intentionally been made to personify (and perhaps the intention may be all too apparent) the very antithesis of the lofty passion that burns in the two beings to whom they

are bound, and in whose way they stand as obstacles. Everything in the book indeed, as often in real life, tends to reunite these two who adore each other, but who have striven to tear themselves apart. It is not only the moral baseness of the husband that contributes to their re-union, but also the lack of comprehension in those who love them, like Countess Tarquinia and Count Lao, who surround them with the silence and solitude of the Museo Tiberino and of Villa Cortis ; who lead them along paths of enchantment to the point where the lightest stirring of the heart may well cause their downfall. Circumstances themselves, independently of man's good or evil intentions, act as a hidden force, bringing the lovers together again in the hour of peril. Fogazzaro has mustered all the reasons why, humanly speaking, Elena should yield to Daniele. He has removed every obstacle to their fall ; has conveyed to us that sense of compelling but guiltless passion that is as fate itself, and that engages our ever-growing sympathy and compassion on the side of the unhappy victims of an ill-starred love. But the limit of temptation once reached, when Elena's soul is already trembling like an aspen leaf in the gale of sin, when, placed between the duty of following her worthless husband to Japan, and her love that bids her stay, one word of Daniele's would suffice to detain her, then a force that has remained latent throughout the hidden tragedy of these two souls, their heroic determination to do what is right, breaks loose in the man's heart and enables him to make the supreme sacrifice, to attain, by an act of his will, to that sublime form of love wherein only spiritual union is possible. /Fate is vanquished by a higher love, by the love that is divine and immortal,/ in which Fogazzaro himself was a believer, as he has openly declared in the following words : " I believe in the Eternal Feminine ; in a mysterious sexuality of souls ; in unions that differ widely from human marriages but are based upon the same principles, and concluded, perhaps, for the same end, that of sublime generation, of a continuous ascension in numbers as in measure, towards the Infinite. I believe, hope and dream in this wise." ¹ It is this hope that carries Elena across the seas and holds Daniele to the task of doing battle for his convictions.

¹ Letter to E——, Vicenza, March 8, 1884.

They will no longer even correspond, so complete is the sacrifice they have made in their hearts of every earthly joy ; but the last words that Elena leaves for Daniele contain the expression of a hope in a future union which was more deeply rooted in her lover's heart than in her own. "While life lasts and *even beyond this life !*" is her cry. It was the expression of that confused hope of love, purity and immortality that makes itself felt throughout the book.

Daniele Cortis has now been roaming the world for thirty years, and the rare and unhappy passion of the two chief actors in the drama has been exhaustively studied and criticized. Two opposite schools, especially here in Italy, have hurled the most scathing denunciations against the sentiment that pervades the book, and while their reasons for condemnation have differed, their bitterness and superficiality have generally been on a par. To the moralist who judges a work of fiction as though it were bound to be the development of a thesis rather than the portrayal of what is real in life and a revelation of all life's contrasts of good and evil, who looks upon the characters, not as creatures of flesh and blood, but as mere puppets hung about with clothes, whose movements have all been pre-arranged ; to the moralist, we repeat, *Daniele Cortis* was but the apotheosis of spiritual adultery and a pernicious example of what a friendship between the sexes may lead to. Nor was the criticism of those entirely indifferent to Christian morality any less severe, of those who, possessing no religious experience of the struggle between the spirit and the flesh, lack that full comprehension which one who has explored their depths and experienced them in himself must have gained of the two warring elements, sin and renunciation, upon which the secret drama of the conscience is based. Critics of this description placed the coarsest interpretation upon the temptations and the spiritual victory described in *Daniele Cortis*. The painful inner struggle to free man's higher nature from the trammels of his lower instincts, they held to be but a refined form of sensual delight, a voluptuous lingering on the verge of sin, a "more subtle fornication" consummated in imagination and covered by the mantle of religion. They saw in the romance

nothing better than a treatise on the artistic refinements of the erotic passion to which the chivalrous Middle Ages had pointed the way, and which taught that every obstacle in the path of the material satisfaction of desire has the effect of intensifying and whetting that desire. / They therefore declared the book to be disingenuous and subtly immoral. /

/ Both classes of critics, however, appear to have completely overlooked what to us is clearly apparent—that *Daniele Cortis* is not a novel with a purpose. It is merely the story of a temptation ; / and it is precisely because of this absence of thesis, because the author has allowed himself to be guided to the final solution by his own passions, because he lives in and with the romance, that many of the criticisms pronounced against his book seem to us to rest upon false premises and to have originated in a complete misconception of the spirit in which it was evolved out of its author's very being, out of a personal experience of his own.

When Antonio Fogazzaro began to write *Daniele Cortis* he certainly had no idea what manner of salvation his two chief actors would work out for themselves. He had not decided beforehand in favour of renunciation ; he did not know whether Daniele and Elena would be strong enough to resist the compelling attraction of an all-consuming passion. In his own soul, and during those periods of hesitation that necessarily accompany any real temptation, love and duty weighed against each other in the balance. This state of hesitancy would appear to have dominated him throughout, until he began to compose the closing chapters, which are a very hymn of exultation at his liberation from the spell that had been dragging him towards the natural ending of every passionate love ; a hymn to duty such as no mere moralist could compose in support of a thesis ; a hymn such as only he may sing who has known temptation at its sorest. A single letter will suffice to prove the truth of this, a letter written at Bordighera in the days when he was considering the solution to be given to his work, and in which it seems as if for an instant the author, still half hiding in the shadow, had lifted the veil that concealed his features, and himself confessed to the occult inner struggle upon which the story is based.

"I have been to San Remo to-day" he writes. "You cannot imagine the splendour of sky and sea, the voluptuous smile of those gentle hills where imposing foreign trees, beings brought from southern climes or out of the East, stand grouped around marble villas or display themselves on white terraces ; where one breathes the perfume of luxury and of worldly pleasures in the very air. The towering agave, with its crown of blossom, reminds me of the two lines you are familiar with :

*'Ecco superbo ascende il fior dell' agave,
Arde nel cielo splendido il mio sol.'*

And everything, everything, from the perfume-laden air drunk with love, from the sea, drunk with wind, and sun, everything cried out to me in a voice at once sweet and strong : ' There is but this life ; there is nothing else than love ; enjoy the fleeting hour to the full. God Himself tells you this through your own heart and the senses He has given you that you may live and love and enjoy and pass away forever, after having yielded all your verdure, your blossoms and your fruit. We tell you this, beautiful, amorous, free creatures of God that we are ! Love with your whole being. One single hour of all-consuming passion, one single hour of perfect truth is worth all your mad dreams of the ideal that has no existence, of passions that are not of this world, of a future life you may perhaps never enjoy. You are a poet, and despite your proud and oft-repeated boast of spirituality, you feel the divine poetry of the senses. What is coarse and vulgar in sensualism is not for you ; you abhor that form of modern art that wallows in the mire, but at this very moment the immortal art of Greece has power to incite you, that art which does not stupidly divide love in two, but extols it without shameful hypocrisy, sings of it in all its perfection as God has made it, Who makes naught that is impure. Is not such art, beauty ? Is not this Nature that is crying out to you, beauty also ? And is not everything that is beautiful, true and holy as well ? ' Thus did land and sea exhort me, or rather thus did a voice speak within me, a voice that will not be silenced even at my age, because a part of my youth is still intact and survives the passing years. I wish you to know how this voice cries out to me, that nothing concerning me may be hidden from you. At such moments the spirit of religion passes from me, becomes congealed, and I cease to feel God's presence as if all faith were dead within me. Only my will, I know not how, withstands the tempest, and now holds my imagination in check, whereas at one time it would invariably

evade my control. This evening from the top of a promontory, I watched Venus trembling and glowing amidst the clouds crimsoned by the rays of the sun that was fast sinking into the sea. How lovely she was ! How plainly she also bade me enjoy and love ! But chancing to turn towards the gloomy East, I saw above the promontory they call Capo Nero, another solitary star that seemed to me even more sublime in its austere melancholy, that is certainly infinitely farther removed from us and infinitely higher above us. With a sense of deep emotion I recognized that this orb, and not Venus, was my star—our star—and I knew that I should ever follow it faithfully.”¹

This page, so full of poetry and passion, reveals the novel in its true light and removes all doubt concerning the value to be placed upon its conclusion. The letter convinces us that the hero’s renunciation is not the result of any theory on love or duty. The author did not draw upon his imagination for Daniele’s sacrifice ; he experienced it in himself. It is no abstract theory but an actual experience. For this reason the work must be studied in all its concrete, psychological complexity. Here morality is no mere scheme of logic imposed upon reality from without, but is derived from the truth of things experienced, and is distinguished by that instability by those very imperfections the rigid moralist will condemn, but which nevertheless are of the human heart ; of the heart wherein the distinction between good and evil, between passion and duty is well-nigh intangible ; wherein conflicting sentiments are not separated by definite boundaries, and love is a far less simple matter than in a treatise on ethics. The reason, indeed, why the solution by heroic renunciation is so convincing to us is that it does not convey the impression of having been imposed by the will of the casuist who, not without difficulty, has succeeded in cutting the Gordian knot of spiritual adultery, but rather do we receive the impression of a sudden outpouring of occult forces, of the beating of wings that uplift, of the unexpected revelation of a higher beauty lending joy to sacrifice itself.

The aura of *Daniele Cortis*, to him who reads it without prejudice and without regard to the opinions of others, is that of a lofty conception of love, of the triumph of spirit over instinct.

¹ Letter to E——, Bordighera, January 16, 1884.

To the young who, in the literature of their day, had beheld only the triumph of a passion that amounts to nothing more than sensual satisfaction, this *great love* in which the spirit conquers and, renouncing the joys of a fleeting sexual union, aspires to a sublime union, the thought of which "awakens in the heart of man the occult desires of a future existence," was the revelation of an unknown world, an unknown beauty that encouraged many to alter their course in life.

If, then, *Daniele Cortis* was well adapted to serve as a starting-point for many souls, if to some the book represented the first rung of the ladder in an ascension from flesh to spirit, it nevertheless contained somewhat of the leaven of unconquered sensuality as well as certain dubious passages and subtleties, for which reason it might not with impunity be considered as a final rule or used as a book of spiritual direction. The very passion which in its author's own case had become force of will, liberation from "weak nature," might also become, in more flaccid spirits, an undesirable form of sentimentality, a state of chronic temptation, most attractive to those who shrink from the material fall through timidity or indolence rather than from conviction or fervour. In his brief but admirable poem entitled *The Statue and the Bust*, Browning has described a life such as this led by a man and woman, wherein the word "to-morrow" checks every temptation to sin, and reveals the dread of a moment the pair would never face. And the conclusion is that although they had not actually satisfied the desires of the flesh, nevertheless, in the later life, they may neither see God nor participate in the glories of those saintly fighters who marched through life with a well-defined purpose. The unintentional and unforeseen influence that *Daniele Cortis* exerted (especially over women of a certain restless temperament) tended to weaken resistance to temptation of a special sort and to encourage a form of enervating spiritual adultery, undeserving of that pity which Dante expresses for those who suffer material downfall.

It was precisely in consequence of this result that as Fogazzaro gradually receded from the sequence of experiences which had found expression in his novel, he became ever more severe in his judgment of the book whose composition had

afforded him the higher ecstasy of his life. A passion must be dead within us before we can pass judgment upon it. That we may rightly judge our own work of art, the glowing mass out of which it has been fashioned must have grown cold for ever. Viewed no longer with the eye of the lover but with that of the critic, its defects become even more apparent to us than to others; and thus it was that Fogazzaro came to see the book as one which, being misinterpreted, was well calculated to inflame in others a passion which "no matter how heroic the heart that harbours it may be," can never be other than a great misfortune when compared with that complete and legitimate love wherein man "finds moral beauty, a source of efficiency in life's undertakings and the multiplying of all his powers of virtue."¹ Such considerations as these gave the author strength—a rare strength indeed—to publicly condemn that love which is *not complete*, and this as soon as an opportunity arose of giving artistic shape to the conviction that had estranged him from *Daniele Cortis*. This opportunity was provided by a message which seemed to reach him from beyond the grave and inspired the short poem entitled *Eva*, which is one of his best. In the following confidential letter to Monsignor Bonomelli, Fogazzaro has explained the state of mind he was in when he wrote the verses :

" . . . I felt bound to declare my true opinion concerning amorous relations between two persons who are not free. I felt bound to make it clear that although I may have represented the relation existing between Cortis and Elena in such a manner as to arouse pity, sympathy and even admiration in the reader, that relation, nevertheless, does not correspond with my own moral ideal. My moral ideal with regard to such sentiments is explained in certain lines of the poem *Eva*. A passion, no matter how sublime, that is contrary to the laws God has prescribed for this temporary state of ours, contrary to the union of man and woman on earth, can manifest itself only in a future state when the present shall have passed away. To my mind this is perfection. Nevertheless I would not imply that one who loves as did *Eva* (for before Christ no such love as this existed) may not hope that the error will be reckoned deserving of pity and forgiveness."²

¹ Letter from Antonio Fogazzaro to Luigi d' Isengard, January 26, 1896.

² Letter to Monsignor Geremia Bonomelli, Vicenza, December 26, 1891.

Thus objectively did Fogazzaro judge the passion of Elena and Daniele, having found in himself the strength to conquer it. And with him we also must condemn in this passion all that may in any way encourage weak imitation. *Daniele Cortis* must not become a model; but it would be unjust not to recognize (for herein lies the secret of the *beneficent* influence the story exerted as well) how strong was the spiritual light that illumined both of the living actors in the drama, and with what tragic abnegation they made their sacrifice.

/ Although the sentimental side of the story/may be the more interesting, no one who studies *Daniele Cortis* can overlook the political significance of the book, especially as it contains the profession of a faith in which its author was never shaken.

It was amidst surroundings of extreme moral and political depression that Antonio Fogazzaro was moved to express his own inspirations by means of *Daniele Cortis*. As a contrast to the prevailing sense of discouragement, he was determined that this being of passions his art had created should face the world with a firmly established confidence in all those things in which others had ceased to believe. Fogazzaro had already declared that he intended to swim against the current, and in fact the main facts of his political creed/were in direct opposition to the direction in which Italy was drifting at that time. In his opinion the country's regeneration could be achieved only through a harmonious blending of three elements: a strong monarchy, a State democracy capable of introducing radical reforms, and a profoundly religious spirit. To achieve this blending a new party was necessary, "a party that shall not be called Catholic, but shall understand the immense political importance of the religious spirit; a party that shall be conservative in polities and liberal as regards social reforms."¹ Of such a party *Daniele Cortis* was to be the herald.

Cortis, in fact, is unique. In the novel he is described as a Liberal of the school of Cavour, but a Liberal fully emancipated from the "dogmas and idols" of Liberalism. He is neither a clerical nor a "moderate," nor does he even champion conciliation

¹ Letter to E——, February 13, 1884.

in the sense in which many of the most intelligent Catholics accepted it at that time. At a moment when the fortunes of the monarchy appeared to be on the wane, and in which Pope Leo the Thirteenth's anti-Unionist attitude was becoming ever more threatening, Cortis does not hesitate to confirm his belief that a monarchy reinforced and a Church purified are the two elements necessary for the uplifting of the nation's moral consciousness. / But this conviction of his had nothing in common with the sentimentally optimistic state of mind of the latest "Neo-Guelfs," to whom peace between State and Church appears in the rosy light of an idyll between a Pope and a King. Cortis' attitude is that of a Ghibelline Catholic. His political ideal is based upon a clearly defined distinction between civic activity and the religious life. "My political ideal," he says, "will never be that of a party which seeks to subordinate the rights and interests of the State to any authority however high, however legitimate, which has been founded on another basis, by other means, and for a different purpose. For the sake of political equilibrium and internal peace I may desire that this party should honestly accept the existing order of things and one day become a useful and respectable element in Parliament; but if, at the time, I have the honour of a seat in that assembly, I will never join forces with the representatives of this party, not, at least, until it shall have ceased to be a purely religious body and have become a purely political body, whose members shall have profoundly modified their views with regard to the rights and functions of the State."¹

Differing in this from many of his contemporaries, he is thoroughly alive to the importance of the Church as the centre of a religious life which the statesman must not ignore. / He accepts the idea of a "free Church in a free State," for Cortis is thoroughly imbued with the spirit of Cavour; but he holds that a State that is free and not atheistic must not consider this free Church that has been purified and exalted, in the light of a hostile and ineffectual power. Liberty and religion must cease to be two antithetical terms. "We must," he tells us, "accept the principle laid down by Count Cavour in a memorable speech on the abolition

¹ *Daniele Cortis*, Chapter viii.

of the ecclesiastical courts, which principle declares that both religion and liberty are essential to the progress of modern society.”¹ He believes, in short, that the world is drifting towards a democratic civilization, and that only the teachings of the Gospel can prevent the participation of the masses in political life from becoming a “leap in the dark” and render it a long stride forward on the straight and inevitable path of evolution. The upward surging masses did not terrify him as they terrified the timid conservatives of his day, and this because he was convinced that, by their means, the fundamental principles of that justice which Christ preached, and which no wave of barbarism will ever be able to sweep away, will eventually come to prevail.

“I believe,” Cortis says, “that this ferment of democracy contains a certain leaven taken from Christianity; my mind can readily conceive a luminous and possible ideal of *Christian Democracy* differing widely from the despotism of egotistical majorities, avid of privileges, which are a menace to modern liberty.” Thus it is Fogazzaro who for the first time pronounces the words *Christian Democracy* in Italy. At core Daniele Cortis is the first democratic Christian, not indeed in the sense of the *Rerum novarum Encyclica*, in the sense of a democracy subject to Rome both confessionally and politically, but in so far as he believes democracy and Christianity to be the two great forces by means of which a new civilization will be evolved out of the present. Identifying himself completely with this being of his own creation, Fogazzaro expounds his theory of a radical reform, to be initiated by a party imbued with the spirit of Christianity.

“At times, when I am at work on *Cortis*,” he says, “I feel that, should a political party of this description arise in Italy and wish to make me its candidate, it might perhaps be my duty to accept, although I am well aware that, contrary to the opinion held by many of my fellow-townsmen, I possess none of the attributes of the successful politician. The thought of all this troubles me at times, but I comfort myself with the confidence, not to say certainty, I entertain that, holding the opinions I do, I should never be elected. I neither have nor ever have had any longing for a seat in Parliament. . . . But I would gladly seize any opportunity of defending my opinions with the pen. Meanwhile it is incumbent

¹ *Daniele Cortis*, Chapter viii.

upon me to study exhaustively these opinions of mine. My most deeply rooted convictions, those which form my starting-point, may be epitomized as follows: that the present distribution of wealth is iniquitous, and that consequently, its errors and excesses notwithstanding, socialism rests upon a foundation of justice; that without the far-reaching, penetrating and direct action of Christianity the social transformation towards which we are drifting will be of an appalling nature, and will fill the world with blood and ruins.”¹

Such were the political convictions of *Daniele Cortis*, convictions from which Antonio Fogazzaro never swerved, because they formed the very substance of his moral creed.

We are quite ready to admit that to-day it would be an easy matter to disprove many of the political opinions set forth in *Daniele Cortis*, especially as regards the development of a democratic order which Cortis foresaw as the redemption of the proletariat, through the philanthropic action of the State, and not as the autonomous participation of the working masses in the formation of the new code of justice. But considered in the light of a protest against the scepticism and inertia of the times, the work still has its value as a battle that was not fought in vain.

Nevertheless, although the study of these inner aspects of *Daniele Cortis* and of its political side may still be of interest, the book would long since have been reckoned among the things that are dead, had it not been kept alive by a figure which, amidst much that has become stale with time, still retains all its poetical freshness. This is Elena, who was not only the best beloved, but also the most perfect of all the creatures born of Antonio Fogazzaro’s affection.

She far outshines all his other heroines. *Marina*’s morbid psychology is far from being true to life; *Edith* is a dream of goodness whose feet never rest upon the earth; *Violet* is a companion for that region into which one may pass only through the gates of death; *Jeanne* is a pitiful, suffering creature, incapable of steadfast love; *Leila* is all caprice and passion. Of them all *Elena* is the most truly alive and real, the most truly womanly in the loftiness of her affection, the most touching and human in her

¹ Letter to E——, Vicenza, February 16, 1884.

passions, the one for whom there exists neither heaven nor hell, sin nor virtue, but only the love of a man who is all in all to her. Had he bade her stay she would have remained ; but he decrees that she shall leave him, and she sets forth obedient to his will. In her weakness as in her strength, in her smile as in her tears, in her unbelief as in her faith, she believes and desires only what Daniele believes and desires. It is precisely this piteous non-resistance of hers that lends the sense of brooding tragedy to her life. Every tragedy has its innocent victim. Elena accepts the decrees of a law that is foreign to her nature, and bows before that God who lives not in her own heart but in her lover's.

In her Fogazzaro's art becomes more austere, more intimate, more truly spiritual, for outward matters shrink into insignificance beside the entralling drama of Elena's life.

For this reason, indeed, we perceive in her no sign of melting away into the dim mists of oblivion, for only such figures as hers, which have their roots at the very core of him who gave them life, can withstand the ravages of time. Elena, in fact, is a very vital part of our country's literary heritage. She is unaffected by the lapse of years, because she is one of the few women who have loved truly in our literature. Even in the greatest of our poet's—Carducci, d'Annunzio and Pascoli—the critic would fail to discover a single type of womanhood worthy to hand down to coming generations the memory of the poem that was her life. But in Antonio Fogazzaro, even should he deem many portions of this author's artistic output superannuated and lifeless, the searcher would still find Elena, who embodies the soul of a woman capable of loving in very truth with that great love that is of all times. This woman, encompassed by suffering, revealing little of her passion by outward signs, will again look forth upon posterity from her place of exile beyond the seas, and tell of all the occult poetry and suppressed ardour which burned in the souls of the women of her day ; will tell of what our writers failed to apprehend, of that spiritual passion which lay beyond the realms of literature at the very heart of life itself.

CHAPTER VIII

A DOMESTIC INTERLUDE

THE writing of novels had now become a necessity with Fogazzaro. Almost immediately after the publication of *Daniele Cortis* he again set to work, but *Il Mistero del Poeta* (The Mystery of the Poet) did not appear until 1887. In the intervening period, however, he produced several short stories and poems which were published in a volume entitled *Fedele and other Tales*.¹

This work is lacking both in substance and cohesion. It is a collection of writings composed at different times and under different intellectual conditions, wherein, beside some pages of undeniable merit, we find much that is indifferent and even worthless.

On the other hand, the study of the author's family life during this period of preparation offers much that is of interest. We should form no just conception of his personality did we devote all our attention to an examination of his literary labours and inner life, to the exclusion of the light shed upon it by the events that were transpiring within the narrow domestic circle formed by his own children and those aged members of his family he held in such affectionate veneration. He was ever alive to the beauty of the family life founded upon principles of purity and stability ; alive to the poetry of the home that must be guarded as though it were a temple of loving-kindness ; to the poetry of family traditions to be treasured as precious possessions ; of joys and sorrows shared as is the daily bread. He possessed a high sense of order and of social harmony which would not allow him to sacrifice the duties imposed upon him by his position in life to the fulfilment of the promptings of his inspiration. Even more strongly than his vocation as a writer he sensed his manhood, and as a man he was prepared to face reality in all its aspects.

Among the family events that affected him most strongly at this time, bringing him, as it did, face to face with a painful

¹ Galli, publisher, Milan, 1887.

reality with which he was as yet unfamiliar, was the death of his father-in-law. Count Angelo Valmarano passed away on May 23, 1884, after an illness which had been brought on and aggravated by cruel mental anguish. Fogazzaro was deeply afflicted by this event. In this case, however, certain sentiments mingled with his grief that had heretofore remained concealed and unrecognized, and which throw a new light upon his psychology. By the death of Count Angelo, Fogazzaro was suddenly confronted with the problem of riches.

In order thoroughly to understand his state of mind it will be necessary to study a confession made by him on the preceding 16th of February, wherein he wrote :

“ This morning I was reading the *Vaticano Regio*, a book recently published by an ex-Jesuit who has been converted to Liberal Catholicism. It is a work lacking in moderation and which does not greatly appeal to one, but which is nevertheless, extremely profound. It contains a startling page on the responsibility of the rich in the eyes of God, who by hoarding what is superfluous are really hoarding what belongs to others, and therefore reap where they have not sown. During the early years of my married life I suffered acutely, as I have already said, because I lacked the means of taking those journeys and purchasing those books which would have been so useful to me. But when I began teaching Gina, and gave my services in various public capacities, attending at the same time to my literary labours, I took comfort in the thought that, if by a mere chance I had been born in easy circumstances, up to a certain point I was morally entitled to enjoy them ; but later on my activities did not appear sufficient to justify the enjoyment of a position of great ease and the possession of a well-filled purse.”¹

Now that his wealth was increasing he felt an increasing responsibility, and was apprehensive lest this material blessing, if not used in accordance with the law of the spirit, might constitute an unjustifiable privilege. This fortune became a source of torment to him.

“ The time for devoting my attention to matters of business is come,” he writes at this period. “ . . . When the legacies and

¹ Letter to E——, February 16, 1884.

other claims are paid off there will certainly be far less money than people think, but at all events it is too much for me. Only to Gina have I spoken of the intense depression under which I am labouring, for she appreciates and is worthy of the confidence I place in her; and now I open my heart to you also. I assure you that I am determined to use for my own comfort as little as possible of this wealth which should really be devoted exclusively to the use of my wife and children. But various reasons of expediency make it no easy matter to put this determination into practice.”¹ This affluence seemed to him but a drag upon the free flight of his spirit. “Figures, which I detest and always have detested,” he writes despairingly, “are taking their revenge upon me, and surround me by day and by night like a cloud of gnats, stinging me sharply with their cold and steely accuracy. Alas! how will the artistic vein ever be able to flourish?”²

The bare thought that this vein might be desiccated for all time by the parching breath of riches, filled his heart with a sense of melancholy that prayer alone could relieve.

It is not unprofitable, however, for a man to pass through periods of similar suffering. Only such as are indifferent to the conflict between the world of the spirit and the unrelenting materialism of that other world which at once invites and oppresses us, are in danger of sinking into that state of lethargy that is as death itself. In the case of Fogazzaro the torment of being obliged to live the life of the privileged classes, which was contrary to his principles, and the impossibility of relinquishing a fortune which was not his own, rendered his conception of his obligations towards society all the more rigid. He felt that his labours as novelist and poet were entirely inadequate, and deemed it incumbent upon him, if his conscience was to be appeased, to assume many of those offices which, precisely because they carry no pecuniary remuneration, should be filled by the rich, who are under the strongest of obligations to labour for the benefit of others.

Antonio Fogazzaro, therefore, became a member of the Town Council of Caldognò (1885), a member of the Board of Guardians of Vicenza (1886), a member of the Provincial School Board (1886), president of the Board of Directors of the Homes for

¹ Letter to E——, Vicenza, May 25, 1884.

² *Ibid.*, June 3, 1884.

Poor Children in Vicenza (1886), the city's representative on the Board of Directors of the Foundlings' Hospital (1886), and a member of the Patriotic League (*Commissione alle Cose Patrie*) in 1887. To the duties connected with all of these offices he devoted much of the time and energy he would otherwise have bestowed upon his favourite occupations. He arranged his life in such a way that part of it should belong to the poor. He slept less, in order that none of the hours consecrated to poetry might be curtailed. It was his intention that every hour of his day should be devoted to work for the benefit of others, and that every day, every month and year should flow smoothly within the channel formed by the duties he had undertaken.

Yet another and still more painful affliction befell Fogazzaro during this period. On the Saturday in Holy Week, April 11, 1887, his father Mariano passed suddenly away. The manner of his death is described by his son in his last work, in language so full of feeling as to leave no doubt that the writer is describing a personal experience. Like Signor Marcello in *Leila*, the venerable patriot and staunch believer had departed this life silently and at peace with God. He had performed his Easter duties at his parish church on Holy Thursday, and had spent Friday in a spirit of pious recollection. On entering his room on Saturday morning the servant found him sitting up in bed with his shoulders resting against the headboard, already stiff and cold in death. On the table beside him the night-light was still burning.

To Antonio Fogazzaro the death of the father he so deeply revered, encompassed as it was with so much religious solemnity, came as a fresh summons towards the mysteries of the higher life. Certain affections we cherish are cut short on earth only to shine forth again like stars in a distant sky. In the silence of death, with all eternity for a background, his father's figure stood revealed in all its innate grandeur—a grandeur that had never been appreciated by those who judge only by success in worldly matters, nor even by Antonio Fogazzaro himself in the ordinary course of home life.

Fogazzaro immediately set about writing down memories and collecting letters that might be of use to him in compiling the story of his father's life, as he intended doing. Ubaldino Peruzzi

had been the first to urge him to raise such a monument of art and affection to the memory of Mariano. Giuseppe Giacosa, whom Fogazzaro consulted with regard to his intention, replied in terms that to-day are a source of infinite comfort to the present writer. "That is precisely the sort of book you should write," he said. "Apart from the fact of your filial affection, there is no one in Italy better fitted to write honestly of the life of this honest man. These are the books that are of the greatest importance. I have just spent three or four happy and well-filled days reading the *Life of Sella*, published by Guiccioli, and my spirit has been greatly refreshed by the perusal of this work. In this country we have made the mistake of limiting all literary production to works of fiction and essays in criticism, with the result that fiction has already begun to pall upon us and that the essays count for nothing."¹

The story of Mariano Fogazzaro's life, however, was never written. His father's memory remained with his son and was the leaven of much that was good and beautiful, but that blossomed in different ways. Instead of composing his biography Antonio Fogazzaro was inspired to portray his father's personality in *Franco Maironi*, the hero of *The Patriot (Piccolo Mondo Antico)*, and in the telling, the story became a poem in very truth. We shall see how intensely that noble and zealous being, that champion of the ideal, lives again in his son's masterpiece. Even in death the father still continued to be the serene and impartial judge of all his son's opinions and achievements. To this invisible watcher Antonio Fogazzaro could offer only the loftiest of conceptions palpitating with what is divine and worthy of his father's faith. It was while writing the "gentle tale" he called *The Mystery of the Poet* that he appealed to his dead father during the night preceding All Souls' Day, as if seeking the guidance he would gladly follow :

*Scrivo, e tu intendi al moto del pensiero
Severamente; or più non curi il mondo,
Nulla più vuoi da me che il santo e il vero.²*

¹ Letter from G. Giacosa, June 18, 1887.

² While I write do thou keep close watch upon my thoughts; for now the world is naught to thee, and from me thou wouldest have only what is holy, what is true. (Literal Translation.)

CHAPTER IX

THE MYSTERY OF THE POET

WHILE engaged upon the composition of his new romance Antonio Fogazzaro's conscience was assailed by scruples. He was forced to ask himself whether a Christian writer might exalt this passion. On the one hand, he was fully alive to the responsibility he was assuming by flinging a lighted torch into the world, where it might easily serve to ignite hidden and unquenchable fires ; on the other hand, he regarded love as a mighty, purifying flame, and felt that to encourage the spread of a passion that glowed with spiritual light might indeed be a mission of charity in a century of carnal lusts.

It was this inner conflict that moved him to an exposition of his own "theory of love" in its relation to art, a theory which he embodied in a lecture entitled *An Opinion of Alessandro Manzoni's*, and delivered at the *Circolo Filologico* in Florence in March 1887. At the time no one understood that this exposition was rather an answer to the most vexed questionings of his own uneasy conscience than a criticism of views held by another. Manzoni maintained that "while love is indeed necessary in the world, there is quite enough of it as it is, and that there is no call for any one to encourage its spread ; that encouragement does but cause it to flourish where it is of no use. There are other sentiments of which the world does really stand in need, and of which, according to his capacity, every writer should seek to spread the knowledge . . . but as for love ! . . . Setting it at a low figure, there must be quite six hundred times as much love in the world as is necessary to preserve our valuable species from extinction." Thus in scathing and ironical language did the author of *I Promessi Sposi* confess his faith in the stern principle that had induced him to eliminate from his masterpiece every passage that placed love "in such a light as to incline the reader's

spirit towards that passion." This was at once a confession and an example of which to-day we are in a position to appreciate the immense value both ethical and æsthetical. For to be able to dispense with the element of love in art is not only a sign of artistic potentiality, but also the secret that renders the work produced immortal, renunciation in itself acting as a shield against a too facile enthusiasm destined to degenerate into too facile surrender. Manzoni's theory pointed out the arduous road to be trod by mighty intellects. In the world of the spirit there are sky-piercing, light-encompassed heights that only saints or geniuses may scale by transcending the sphere of sensual passion. Dante in the closing cantos of the *Paradiso* and Michael Angelo in the Sistine Chapel are borne upon the wings of their inspiration to those summits where sensual passion ceases and the spirit dwells amidst what is eternal, beyond the misty sphere of unstable instincts. Like Tolstoi at a later date, Manzoni was moved to preach this principle of heroic renunciation in obedience both to his convictions as a Christian and to his poetic intuition.

As regards Fogazzaro, however, his views on this subject did not coincide with those of the earlier master. His personal experience of love had been of a vastly different description. To him to renounce love would have meant renouncing authorship and thought itself. He was therefore disposed to see in Manzoni's theory only its repulsive outer shell—which contained, indeed, overmuch of the crude irony of the eighteenth century—to perceive the outer shell and ignore the kernel. Thus the meaning of that passage wherein its author declares that there is six hundred times more love in the world than is necessary, seemed to Fogazzaro to be in exact concordance with Schopenhauer's conception of love as an instinct for the preservation of the species alone. Fogazzaro himself regarded the preservation of the species as one of the purposes of the amorous passion, as a high purpose indeed and one not to be mentioned in a spirit of levity; but to his mind it was neither the sole nor main purpose of love. "It is the rule," he wrote, "with all the works of that Higher Power by Whom the universe has been ordered, that their purpose is never a single one; on the contrary, so manifold and varied are their purposes as to render it eternally impossible for

the human intellect to form even the vaguest conception of their range." But amidst the innumerable purposes which he attributed to love one stood forth pre-eminent before his human consciousness, *unum fieri cum eo quod amat*: the sublime union of two human beings, a union to which the answer of the "Amorous Spirit" in the Persian legend might well apply; of the spirit that, on knocking at its beloved's portal, was recognized only when, in reply to the question, "Who art thou?" it answered, "I am thyself." Of a love such as this, which it is given only to the few to know, Fogazzaro felt the instinct of species to be but a minor part, a brief moment on the road to a deeper union, "to a state of supreme felicity greater than all other purely terrestrial felicity, its own loftiness rendering it inaccessible to every element of suffering, in which particular it resembles, though in a lesser degree, the felicity man may experience in contact with his God." In the religious fervour of his conviction that such was indeed the true purpose of love, he claimed that "Death's Imperial Seal" was set in confirmation of his theory; for, he pointed out, never was the true essence of that love which tends towards a higher purpose than the preservation of the species, more clearly revealed than in those cases where, "death having claimed one of the lovers, the problem of sex has ceased to exist." In the songs wherein the greatest poets bemoan the loss of one who has passed into the unknown, in the exalted nature of a passion to which separation has lent an element of expectaney, he saw, even in those who are without faith, the marks of that great love which, "though the lovers themselves be not aware of it, tends ever in the one direction, strives ever towards the achievement of its purpose, towards that complete union which on earth is unattainable." Such was the sentiment Fogazzaro believed it to be the mission of art to exalt and diffuse. Manzoni might maintain the existenee of overmuch that is but blind instinct, but let no man profane what is divine by declaring the world to be too full of love. Let no poet fear to describe the origin, growth and communings of a sentiment which, albeit through the medium of his senses, awakens the yearning for a future life in the heart of man.

Such were the metaphysics of love which Fogazzaro set up

against the doctrine of Manzoni and in accordance with which he shaped the romance he had in hand.

Were we to examine this attitude of mind only as we find it revealed in *The Mystery of the Poet* it might indeed strike us as a mere literary pose ; but the study of Fogazzaro's letters, wherein his life is mirrored day by day, an examination of the scattered notes by means of which he sought to fix a passing thought, will show us how much more strongly was the reality of his inner life dominated by his mystical attitude towards woman, than was his art, which reflects it but faintly. In corroboration, as it were, of what I have said, and to prepare our minds for the consideration of the romance in question, I have collected, and here insert, certain extracts from confessions which most clearly reflect the mystical exaltation of that *sublime love* of which Fogazzaro possessed the secret and the fire.

FRAGMENTS FROM A BOOK OF CONFESSIONS

August 14, 1885.—I have just descended from the terrace. After I had prayed I sent my greetings through space to *her*, in words of love, of that undying passion which will reach its fulness in Heaven. Life of my soul, my salvation ! The flesh is fighting hard against me in these days. I realize that I should succumb ignominiously, as I have done in the past, were it not for *her*. Therefore, after praying to God, I prayed to *her*. The lightning flashed about me, black clouds obscured the sky, but here and there, out of window-like patches of blue, the stars shone brightly forth. I knew I was offending no one either in Heaven or on earth by calling upon her name. It was as though I had communed with Vega, that resplendent star. While my spirit was uplifted my senses were appeased.

I should like to rectify many things in my life—to make it more fruitful, to waste less time, to strive more earnestly against a state of somnolent inertia that has frequently oppressed me of late. . . . I am determined to accomplish this.

August 18.—O hand, dear, blessed hand, whose touch I feel ever upon my heart, upon my head ! You are my defence ! You protect me against my own imaginings that conjure up before me pictures of earthly happiness such as I have never known, shall never know. In Heaven—In Heaven. . . .

September 1.—Moments of happiness, of profound emotion, sweet upsoarings of the spirit and sublime thoughts—how can I

hold you fast ? Oh, do you not feel my lips upon your brow ? Can they not banish the pain? Will not that undying love course through your veins like joyous tongues of fire ? Listen and hear my voice. If (albeit I feel my own inferiority) in some mysterious way, I am indeed yourself ; if I hold no glory, no grandeur, no human beauty comparable even to your shadow ; if I love and honour you with my whole soul, like the word of God ; if I acknowledge that all this is poor, is naught in comparison with what I would fain offer you, cannot this make you happy . . . ? I have been reading the passage in the Epistle to the Galatians that says : “*Spiritu ambulate et desideria carnis non perficietis.* O Lord, such indeed is and ever has been our intention. Sustain Thou us that to the end it may continue thus to be ! Daily do we fervently plead : *Cor mundum crea in nobis, Deus.*”

September 6.—Delay and painful uncertainty. Fortunately I am quite sure that my desire contains no element of forgetfulness of other very tender affections, of other duties. Perhaps, however, I fail to remind myself sufficiently often that ours is an immortal love, the love of all eternity. . . . Happiness in Heaven after sacrifice on earth.

October 8.—O Lord, my lips have never even touched her brow ! As I write these words I am suddenly encompassed by the penetrating fragrance of her roses. It comes to me like a sweet voice, a secret message from her or from some being present in the spirit—a pure spirit to whom all things are visible.

October 14.—*Il Sasso* sparkles in the sunshine ; a bird is singing sweetly. Perhaps it is some gentle spirit that remembers me. I read the Bible and then went out to pray beneath the fir-tree. Did you hear me ? I prayed most fervently to be kept pure. With my hands clasped against the bowl of the dear tree I repeated the verses and then kissed some of the branches that encompassed me. Over in the direction where I know you are the sun was shining. I thanked God for His light and for yours. And now I must say good-bye to trees and hills. . . . Like you, hills and trees, may we also soar heavenwards in innocence, as pure as the snows that cover all the peaks . . . all of them save *Il Sasso*. That pinnacle is ever aglow. Good-bye, good-bye !

October 28.—This is my prayer . . . Lord, Thou who seest all hearts knowest well that mine is pure and strong only in love which it accepts as Thy gift. Continue, O Lord, to hold us united in Thyself, that we may love as do the angels in heaven.

November 2.—Alas ! how far am I, I do not say from all I should be, but even from all I might be ! Sweet spirit, help

me ! From time to time I am inwardly seared by a sinful flame ; sins of the past and images I have allowed to haunt my fancy, rise up and torture me. At such times I can but pray, and think of you as the Divine Word. And then peace is once more restored to me.

December 7.—Transcribed from the *Histoire de Sainte Monique*, par M. l'Abbé Bougaud. “ It has been given to a great Saint of modern times to see in a vision the meeting in the bosom of eternity, of two souls who had loved tenderly, profoundly and purely on earth. St. Vincent de Paul saw the soul of St. François de Sales descend from the sky in the shape of a ball of fire, while from the earth itself, the soul of St. Chantal rose also in the shape of a glowing ball. These two spheres came close together and were merged in one, so that at last only a single flame was visible, which presently faded away into the sky.”

January 3.—I must now think how best to regulate my life. I must compose, learn, be zealous in the fulfilment of my domestic and public duties. At present I am indolent, careless, disorderly and weak as regards the flesh, and also in my moral tendencies. I must bring all the strength of my will to bear upon the work of improving myself, and hold *you* ever present, you who are *the tender word from on high*. I have tried repeatedly to regulate my studies according to rule, but have always failed to keep to it. It is impossible, indeed, to subject inspiration to rule, although it is perhaps necessary to discipline it somewhat. But work may certainly be mapped out in a general way. For example, letter-writing during study hours greatly disturbs me, and this is one reason why I write so few letters. I must postpone letter-writing until those evenings when I do not remain out after eleven o'clock. I ought also to do the greater part of my reading in the evening, and such reading should be less desultory. I should not waste time over books from which no direct advantage is to be gained. I am aware how important the classics and works on sociology and history are for me. As regards the classics I know how much I should gain were I to take up Greek once more after all these years. I should like to be able to read at least fifty verses of Homer or of one of the tragic poets every day. It is a rare thing, nowadays, to find any one well versed in Greek. . . . It would be a pity to lose what little I know of it through neglect. Then I ought to find time for at least one hundred Latin verses and a canto of Dante every day. This should be my daily bread. I might read the Latin verses and Dante in bed. Poetry and works of a purely entertaining

character I should allow myself only on Sundays. The morning hours should be devoted exclusively to composition, and for the present I ought always to be in my study by 6.30 a.m. A part of the afternoon should also be devoted to composition and to reading history, which I need in teaching, and works on sociology. For these branches I might also find some time after 11 p.m. To accomplish all this, however, I shall have to overcome one of my weaknesses. I can only work in the dining-room, and I am never alone there as I should like to be, because my father uses the room also. I cannot possibly write under these conditions, but I must occupy myself in some other way even though I may not like it. I have an unreasonable aversion to working under these conditions. During the day I shall have the hours between eleven and three for visiting our relations, attending to public matters, going to the library when necessary, and for a walk with the children. I propose to visit the *Ospizio dei Proti* at least twice a week, on Monday and Friday, and to seek to acquire an accurate knowledge of its workings and inhabitants. I will endeavour to be more precise and active in the administration of my wife's affairs. I must learn never to postpone what can be done at once. I must also be more active in the performance of my duties as secretary of the Academy. I never persevere in anything, and the fact shames me. . . . O Lord ! hold Thy word ever before the eyes of my spirit. . . . Thy living word !

January 10.—Of all my resolutions I have thus far fulfilled only the following, letter-writing in the evening, the fifty Greek verses and the visits to the *Ospizio*. I have never once succeeded in being in my study by half-past six o'clock. This fact is most humiliating to my pride of purpose. How lazy and drowsy I am ! My body clamours for more than six hours of sleep, but it is wrong to indulge it, for it is perfectly healthy and should not be treated with so much consideration. Were I less yielding my flesh would not vex my spirit so frequently.

March 25.—I have come up here to read the precious words. May God bless you ! It is quite true that I was sorry to have reached my fortieth year, but how far away that time seems now ! I now feel myself endowed with eternal youth.

June 19 (Morning).—It is raining hard, and it was therefore impossible to go into the forest. At half-past seven I said my prayers and read half of the first chapter of Colossians. How directly does every word spoken by the Apostle seem to apply to ourselves, and how consoling to me are those words ! I am

now fully convinced that we have already entered upon our eternity, that the eternal hereafter is already enshrined within us. But we must fight on to the end.

San Bernardino, July 25, 1886.—No, there will be no marriages such as these in the future life, but I am firmly persuaded that everything in this life is but a prelude to, a preparation for, that close union of human spirits—of the balls of fire—in the life to come.

Vallone del Cev., September 25, 1886 (12.30 P.M.).—I am sitting beneath the walnut-tree that throws flickering shadows around me on the grassy slope, while the same wind that stirs its branches plays also in the bushes that grow among the rocks. The ceaseless thundering of the Fascino waterfall fills the valley. When I raise my eyes I see the church at Puria that, half hidden in verdure, is outlined against the noonday haze. I have been reading in my Bible, that fell open at the chapter concerning the seven wives. Now I have paused to think. I recall other hours of silent meditation in this spot, other long and affectionate farewells to the valley. What will the Spirit think of me now? Its voice is silenced, and I fear it is jealous and sad. . . . In this sweet and solemn solitude my soul's first impulse is to worship. I pray, worship, implore forgiveness, and hope. Forgiveness for us all, for us all, O Lord! *Cor mundum et spiritum rectum.*

How small I feel and at the same time how full of pride; how egoistical I am, and what a mighty fire will be needed for the purification of my soul! My heart is ever open to impurity. To speak more accurately, impurity is generated in its depths. Yesterday I read that passage in the *Imitation of Christ* which contains the promise that the Holy Ghost will comfort those who have sacrificed all the joys of the flesh. Yes . . . every joy, every shadow of joy!

December 12, 1886.—To-day the *Imitation* is severe again. *Think not of thyself either now or in eternity.* Certainly the Lord will not demand so much, but the thought is grand and beautiful, and teaches us how imperfect we are. Alas! my heart cries out daily for everlasting recompense!

Montegaldà, October 30, 1887.—‘Remember to love God above all else!’ I strive to, I strive to, sister mine! It is beyond the power of my own will actually to bring about the *experience* of this ardent love of the Divine, but it is in my power to desire it, and God in His mercy demands no more of us. May He bless you for those words that shed so much light: ‘Love the Lord and walk in the path of virtue.’

December 30, 1887.—Your love is as a column of fire to me. . . . I see you already as what you will one day be, raised above all mortal weakness and filled with what is Divine—a strong and beneficent spirit.

These fragments contain the secret of Antonio Fogazzaro's inner life, and reveal the true reason for his opposition to Alessandro Manzoni's theory concerning morality in art. His personal experience, as revealed in these pages, was that human love is but the beginning of love Divine, but a road leading towards things eternal. Every soul must have its sail wherewith to navigate the great sea of infinite mystery ; for Fogazzaro the sail that carried him away from earth and wafted him towards the Almighty, was *sublime love*. Every soul must have its ladder upon which to lean in its ascension towards eternity ; for him the ladder was held firm by a human being who had led him, step by step, towards an undreamt of, invisible and transcendent happiness, towards the complete sacrifice of self to the Divine Will.

In a moment of passionate emotion he epitomized this experience in a few words written with a drop of his own blood.

Books composed for the general public, those reflecting that side of the soul only that is turned towards the world, are written in ink. But there is a blank page whereon a man may set down for a single person, those things that belong to the inaccessible spheres of his nature. Such a page can be written only in blood. Fogazzaro wrote upon this page with a drop that came hot from his very heart, that which it alone could reveal of the hidden world in which it had throbbed.

*Testè passai per il suo cuore ardente
e sotto a tante cose, a tanta gente,
v'era il tuo dolce viso nel profondo.
Poi v'era il sogno di un futuro mondo.
Poi vidi buio, perchè v'era Iddio.¹*

The Mystery of the Poet was born of this drop of blood, but as

¹ I passed but now through his burning heart,
And beneath many things and many beings,
There was thy sweet face in its depths.
Then there was a dream of the world to come.
Then I was blinded, for there was God.

(Literal Translation.)

was often the case with Fogazzaro, artistic expression was less perfect than the sentiment that generated it. The wings of his art were hardly strong enough to bear him to the heights of his passion, and the innate sincerity of one who loves is unavoidably weakened in the conventional plot of a novel. It would almost seem that the author is fearful of too freely revealing his soul's secrets, of unduly exposing the hidden source of his inspiration, and that, urged by this dread, he seeks to place a screen of fantastic scheming between himself and the reader which renders it difficult to distinguish what is really spontaneous, what there is of human experience in the story.

The Mystery of the Poet is a long-drawn-out, extremely sentimental and somewhat improbable novel; a poetical autobiography, wherein a mystic relates the story of his passion.

The work fell short of greatness because it lacked that perfect fusion of actual experience with the poetical, which never fails so to impress and convince the reader as to render him incapable of distinguishing where the one ends and the other begins. We are too fully aware of the conventionality of this lengthy autobiographical recital, which its author had originally intended to develop on the lines of the "simple German novelette." We are too keenly aware of the presence of the author who has usurped the place of the hero, too conscious of the pretence in this poet with his pretended mystery, this poet who seeks to conceal the true hero, the man we have known in the foregoing fragments of confessions. The true poetry that welled up from the heart of Antonio Fogazzaro and from the true mystery of his passion, is hidden, as it were, by that other nerveless poetry which is part of the tale.

While its many imperfections of form may have justified a rival novelist in qualifying it as a very ordinary production, the sincerity and originality of the love episode it contains must ever save it from relegation to the ranks of the commonplace. No one can deny it a prominent position as a book of sentimental confessions, no one can escape the fascination of its psychology. Rather than a tale of the imagination, it is the epilogue of a confession begun in *Malombra*, which closes the long story of that restless spirit which struggled in Daniele Cortis and Corrado Silla,

seeking deliverance from the passion that tormented it. It is the last act of a cycle in the life and artistic development of Antonio Fogazzaro, which might well be entitled the *Cycle of Temptation*.

In *Malombra* he described the terrible ravages of an ardent sensualism, in that first period of a fancy-driven youth—described woman as an element of destruction, glorified by a demoniacal beauty and quick with a vitality that was at war with God. Then Elena came upon the scene. In her, love was no longer blind to divine law, was no longer merely the thirst for earthly happiness, was no longer capricious desire opposed to what is spiritual. But Elena also was a temptress. To love her purely her adorer must fly from her. She also, had he remained near her, would have led him on to sin, would have become but the thirst of a soul for the spiritual life, which it strangled by the very strength of its passion. In Daniele Cortis love might reach fruition only through sacrifice, could conquer only across intervening space, could remain pure only through separation and renunciation. Nor could even this love be called sacred love. But finally Violet appeared, the heroine of *The Mystery of the Poet*—who, in reality, was but Elena herself in a further evolution of passion—the woman no longer separated from him by any laws of God or man, whom her lover was justified in calling the Word of the Lord. No temptress this, but a redemptress. But even this love was unattainable to Fogazzaro save through the supreme separation. He had put the sea between Daniele and Elena, between Violet and himself he placed Heaven. He knew that death must come and separate them before love was consummated on earth; that the woman must be raised above human passions, removed beyond the reach of sensual storms, must dwell in the Lord. On earth, even Violet might have become a temptress. “On several occasions after her death,” the poet wrote, “when I recalled what emotions her words, her lightest touch, her warm breath on my neck had awakened in me, I realized that by separating us so soon, God had wished to save us from the blindness that would have resulted from an all-consuming passion, a passion that would have filled my whole being, to the exclusion in my heart of all other human affections,

perhaps even of God Himself." Only in death could that episode of sacred love be brought to completion—that episode which, since the fourteenth century, had never again been made the theme of any work of Italian literature. And to him also, from those celestial heights whereon Beatrice had spoken to Dante, the woman, encompassed at last by pure love, spoke the word that was the beginning of a New Life.

Thus did the death of Violet mark the close of a period in Fogazzaro's life and artistic development whose profound melancholy and uplifting hope is epitomized in the words of the Saint : "*Inquietum cor nostrum donec requiescat in te.*" For a man of his temperament, avid of love but incapable of enjoying it, eager to live but conscious of the vanity of all worldly things, at once attracted and repelled by the beauty of that "lustreless star," sensually inclined but striving ever for purity, the solution of life's problem was not to be found in a reconciliation of those conflicting sentiments on earth, but only in the transfiguration of his own passion in a higher life of beatitude. The man who had loved Marina and Elena could never have found peace in a material union with Violet, even had such a union been sanctioned by all the laws of God and man. He belonged to the number of those melancholy spirits in whom Christianity awakens the highest hopes for the future, while it fails to inspire them with a sense of peace and order in the present. Antonio Fogazzaro was the last Catholic of the romantic school, suffering from that religious depression born of a heart that does not surrender completely to the Divine Will, but nevertheless knows the joys of life eternal because it has tasted of them. For such tortured spirits human happiness must ever remain a myth beyond realization ; the mystical solution of the problem of life is the only possible one, death the only hope and life beyond the grave the only reality.

CHAPTER X

SCIENCE AND FAITH

IN the preceding chapters we have seen in what manner Fogazzaro's moral and intellectual attitude was slowly determined. Now, however, we find him assailed by fresh scruples. He realized that, to become worthy of the name of Christian, something more, something better than the mere writing of romances was demanded of him. His works, *Malombra*, *Daniele Cortis* and *The Mystery of the Poet* no longer satisfied him. He had missed the goal he had hoped to reach by their means, and it was precisely this sense of dissatisfaction that induced him to adopt a new course. In his boyhood he had read that magnificent idyll of Heine's, wherein the poet tells the story of the band of knights who go forth into the world to do battle for truth and justice wheresoever truth and justice are threatened. This mysterious body of terrestrial archangels had ever held his fancy enthralled, and he now asked himself whether a post be not reserved for him in this free militia of the Holy Spirit. More urgent far than its need of poets was the world's need of secular apostles who should declare their mission openly, nobly and with heroic strength of purpose. The world needed devoted champions of Light, who would not be content with murmuring the words, "Thy Kingdom Come," in the shadow of the Church, but would seek to lay the foundations of that kingdom in and around themselves. A new type of believer was needed after the mighty crisis which, by its counter-reformatory action, had set up a barrier between the secular world and the ecclesiastical, between science and theology, between philosophy and religion. This new type of believer must be one proud of a faith he eagerly proclaimed instead of hiding it away within a reliquary, of a faith whose spirit rather than the letter of its law was to be obeyed. The inner voice told Fogazzaro that he, the poet, was destined to become one of these knights-

errant of the Spirit, whose especial mission it would be to combat a base conception of God and of science.

Thus by a religious sense of apostleship was he led to examine the grave problem of evolution in its bearings upon the Catholic faith. This mystic sense of a mission to be accomplished here in Italy, against the inroads of materialism and positivism, determined him to take the field with a daring that was disproportionate to his scientific preparation, and to face calmly the scathing criticism of both "reds and blacks."¹ Let those who suspect Fogazzaro of having merely followed the fashion of his day, who accuse him of a too ready acceptance of new ideas, or who fail to comprehend the psychological process by which he was lured from art to the study of the problems of evolution, either carefully peruse the letters contained in the present chapter, or open the drawer of his writing-table at Velo, where they will find the following words inscribed upon the wood: "It is for the greater glory of God that I undertake the study of the doctrine of Evolution—September, 1889."

In order, however, to judge of the position Fogazzaro took up in defence of the theory of evolution, it is necessary to examine the views held both by the believers and by sceptics at the time he began to study the vexed question.

It was no mere demonstration of progress in natural and biological science that Fogazzaro had witnessed, but that revolution in the attitude towards Nature of which Charles Darwin (1809-82) was the principal author. This subversion of scientific views, which marks a broadening in the conception of the universe equal to that brought about by Copernicus, by Galileo and by Newton in turn, had taken place precisely when the poet was living most intensely. In 1859, in fact, Darwin published his *Origin of Species*; in 1868, *Variations of Animals and Plants under Domestication* appeared, to be followed in 1871 by the volume entitled *The Descent of Man*, and in 1872 by *Expression of the Emotions in Man and in Animals*. By means of these works Darwin triumphantly established two new conceptions in the world of science: the theory of *descent*, or the generical affirma-

¹ Scientists and churchmen. (Translator's Note.)

tion of the gradual evolution of organisms from the simplest of forms, and the theory of *selection*, wherein he indicates the ways and manner of this evolution in the struggle for existence, which, through selection of the fittest subjects, gradually fixes and accumulates useful attributes. In these two theories is embodied the whole of Darwinism, which has no connection whatsoever with any earlier religious or philosophical doctrines, although these may sometimes appear to us in the light of preludes to that of evolution.

For, as von Hügel points out, nothing is farther removed from evolution as understood by Leibnitz, and in part also by Nicolò Cusano and Hegel, than evolution in the Darwinian sense. "While the first is but a simple development, an unfolding of something that, from the beginning, has been present and complete in miniature, or the differentiation of a unit, the second is the integration of a plurality, the parts not being present from the beginning either in the organism itself or in its embryo but being gradually evolved and organized, one after the other. With the great anatomist, William Harvey, who prophetically anticipated this conception and coined the term, and also with Professor James Ward, we will call this second process not *Evolution*, but *Epigenesis*."¹ Now Darwin had clearly foreseen that his theory would lead to a "complete system of philosophy," and although in his early years he had not declared himself in open opposition to the theistic belief and had even used the word "created" to indicate our incapacity to explain the origin of the first forms, it is, nevertheless, from his premises that monism has arisen. By referring all phenomena back to fixed and natural laws he excluded all intervention on the part of a divinity transcending the universe, and considered the variety of beings as the product of a purely natural creation; while, on the other hand, he "merged" man so completely in the scheme of Nature as to subject human life itself to those same inflexible laws that appear to govern the production of natural forms.² The traditional view of reality was thus radically altered. Man, who had hitherto been looked upon as a central point in the universe, now became but a tiny link in the great chain of beings,

¹ F. von Hügel.

² E. Eucken.

identical with the rest as regards his nature, and differing from his fellow-creatures only in degree. Animate matter took the place of God. Thus monism appeared to be the only system of philosophy capable of conveying a conception of life in harmony with the triumphant theories of descent and selection.

In its turn, however, monism lapsed into mere acquiescent materialism. Whereas the Copernican system had brought home to man the fact that the globe he inhabits is but as a particle of dust in the vastnesses of space, the Darwinian theory revealed him to himself as but an atom in the vastnesses of organic life ; and in this recognition of their own littleness those in whom spiritual consciousness was already either enfeebled or extinguished, discovered the best reason for believing themselves to be the victims rather than the free masters of the blind forces of Nature ; they saw themselves as the slaves of an omnipotent Nature, their beginning and their end. While in the highest realms of thought the new worshippers of science were seeking in experimental research a solution which, while eliminating religion, should supply an answer to the great problem of the universe, the impatient masses were already putting the theory of *descent* into practice by renouncing all those moral values which are the qualities whereby man is distinguished from the brute ; they were joyfully acquiescing in the fact of their relationship with the ape, and this for the sole purpose of freeing instinct from all restraint, and they were applying the theory of *selection* to a vulgar utilitarianism destined to degenerate into that spirit of violence in the procuring of material well-being with which the masses still teem. By opposing the natural history of the world to the sacred story of its creation, the system of philosophy that originated with Darwin brought man so close to Nature—to the generative soil, indeed—as to confound him completely with her, and, in the blind mechanism of which he was made a part, to shut him out from all perception of his inner, autonomous life—of the *fiat* of the Spirit and its laws.

Science itself was not responsible for this rapid degeneration of scientific discoveries into practical materialism. The fault lay with those who sought to give the value of a system of philosophy

and of religion to science, whose province it is to describe things as they are and have been, and to discover, by methods of experimental observation, the laws that control each and every process. Certainly at the time when Fogazzaro began to give his mind to the study of the problem of evolution, the word Darwinism signified and stood not so much for a method of studying Nature and classifying facts, as for a doctrine of life tending to overthrow the millennial doctrine of Christianity ; it stood for a new Church—the Church of all worshippers of Nature, of Matter and of Reason, with its unassailable dogmas, its promises of eternal happiness, its theological inflexibility.

The Catholic world, on the other hand, looked upon this “quasi science” of dogmatism with dread, and in a spirit of opposition to freedom in the search for truth. A spiritual crisis loomed threateningly before those pious souls who ventured to compare the letter of the Bible story with the story of Creation as fossil remains were narrating it to geologists, and the lower animals to biologists. The broader vision of St. Augustine notwithstanding, the letter still retained its undisputed value in the Church, and was jealously safeguarded in the same form in which it had been handed down from the synagogue.

Strict orthodoxy, however, was not alone in feeling the formidable thrust of this fresh advance of science. All that was loftiest and purest in Christian conviction was profoundly troubled at thought of the ultimate consequences to which it seemed the theory of evolution must inevitably lead. Great and good Christians like Tommaseo, Zanella and Stoppani shrank with sudden loathing from the idea of man’s descent through inferior species. In this encroaching Darwinism they saw only unconquerable antagonism to their own religious and human sentiments ; saw the danger that his animal nature would come to predominate over what is spiritual in man ; saw the repulsive relationship between the hairy orang-outang and Adam, the earth’s lord and master. The religious sentiment has its limitations as regards its adaptability to progress. All believers may go a certain distance beyond the boundaries and still retain it, but even those who set out most courageously upon the road of new thought, become aware, at a certain moment, that the

light which has led them on their way, will cease to shine upon them if they persist in pushing forward. Only little by little are the fresh horizons that human thought reveals, illumined by God's own light. In this connection we cannot fail to be interested in the attitude assumed by Zanella, for in him, who was Fogazzaro's master, we find one of those whose spirit suffered a sudden check when brought face to face with a truth which was repugnant to its sentiments. Zanella—the priest and fervent believer—had been the poet of the new vision that natural science had brought to him. In that brief but splendid poem, *La Conchiglia Fossile* (The Fossil Shell), wherein, as Carducci says, "the spirit of poetry undulates amidst the gentle, circumambient murmurings of distant surf," he had opened the eyes of his soul to the marvellous story of the dawn of life, not as he had read it in the Book of Moses, but as it is told in the fossilized spirals of this "daughter of the waves." For his times and the surroundings amidst which he lived, that magnificent hymn of an up-soaring soul, wherein man seems to emerge out of a hazy background formed of the innumerable centuries that have preceded him, was a bold conception indeed, and one whose daring was concealed from punctilious ecclesiastical censors only by the veil of poetry that enshrouded it. In his heart of hearts this priestly poet (who was the immediate precursor of a priestly geologist—Stoppani) "solemnly repudiated," as Fogazzaro tells us, "the ancient concept of the duration of the period of creation," and in substitution of the six days, spoke of a "long sequence of slowly passing seasons."¹ Nevertheless, this churchman, who followed the march of progress with admiring attention, halted in terror before the idea of evolution, which he declined even to discuss. The man who had looked upon the great discoveries of natural science with unfeigned, almost religious admiration, was overwhelmed, when confronted with the theory of Darwin, by a painful sense of oppression that made him long to hark back to the unquestioning faith of childhood, and filled him with a nostalgic melancholy which found expression in the two poems, *La Veglia* and *A Mia Madre*. Herein he was but the exponent of the experience of a nameless multitude of devout souls, to

¹ A. Fogazzaro, *Speeches*: "Giacomo Zanella and his Fame."

whom evolution appeared the negation of all fundamental dogma, and who, brought face to face with an hypothesis that shook the very foundations of their convictions, took refuge in a faith that, in their hearts, they knew to be superior to all theories, which are but as passing shadows.

Surrounded by these conflicting currents of thought, Fogazzaro took up the position he had chosen, neither sharing the dread of the Catholic party nor the unconquerable aversions of his master. His own spiritual convictions led him to repudiate both base materialism and monism as professed in his day by the followers of Darwin, a monism that denied the supremacy of the spirit. In the name of his faith he stood firm against the false scientific spirit which was but a new form of idolatry. He also repudiated a theology that would impede the search for the truths of nature. He held that no one possesses the right to say to science, "Stop here, for beyond this limit God is not," while fresh horizons are being opened up to us by even the most gradual progress in the realms of research. Fogazzaro felt that if his master, Zanella, had stopped short in terror when confronted with the hypothesis of evolution, this had only been because he did not view science in a "truly lofty and religious light." But occult voices urged the disciple to explore those regions his master's poetic sensitiveness had forbidden him to enter.

Heretofore Fogazzaro had never studied the great problem with any definite end in view, and his attitude of vague acquiescence might never perhaps have developed into any stronger sentiment, had he not come across a certain book, written in English, which was destined to flood his spirit with sudden light. This was the work entitled *Evolution and its Relations with Religious Thought*, by the American, Le Conte. In September 1889 he was reading it at Vicenza, in that peaceful little study on the hill-top, whose open windows reveal a vision of plains stretching away to lose themselves in the misty east. It was while he was pursuing this course of reading that his mind was suddenly illumined by one of those flashes of light which seem to scatter the darkness encompassing a vast realm of thought wherein Truth and Error have heretofore been so hopelessly confused as to render it impossible for the eye to distinguish between them.

"As I read those chapters," Fogazzaro says, "wherein Le Conte deals with the religious problem, gradually unrolling the thread of his argument and rendering its purpose more clear with each succeeding phrase, my pulses began to throb more quickly as if stimulated by the promise of a new revelation. My mind was quick to grasp and assimilate the thoughts the book inspired, and then, for the first time, although I am already past the prime of life, my soul was flooded with a consciousness of the beauty of that Truth which transcends the senses, of purely intellectual truth. That ever faithful and constant inner voice had not deceived me; not only did all disagreement between Evolution and Creation cease to exist for me, but the image of the Creator Himself was brought closer to me, became prodigiously magnified in my mind, inspiring me with a new sense of reverence mingled with awe such as one may experience when, on looking into the eye-piece of a telescope, one suddenly sees reflected in the object-glass, close at hand and huge, the same, remote star one has but now been gazing at with the naked eye."¹

This was one of the most decisive periods in the orientation of Fogazzaro's intellectual attitude. Only once before, in early youth, had he experienced another moment of emotion so intense as to amount almost to an ecstasy. He himself tells us, in fact, what ravishment, what amazement that first revelation of the Beauty of Supreme Goodness had aroused in him; and now, when he had already begun to descend life's hill, he was again dazzled by one of those rare flashes of divine illumination when the soul cries out: "I see!"

But amidst all the emotion of the moment he clearly perceived that it was his duty to bear witness to the truth which had been revealed to him. In fact, but a few days after he had finished reading Le Conte's book he disclosed to his friend his intention of "writing a simple *notice* of this American work on evolution, either for the *Antologia* or the *Rassegna*. . . . I feel how important it is to let the public know that, in the opinion of men of vast scientific erudition, the doctrine of evolution, whose truth is now established almost beyond a doubt, instead of destroying, actually confirms the Christian concept of God the Creator, of the free and immortal soul and of the universe."² It

¹ From *Ascensioni Umane*.

² Letter to E——, Vicenza, September 15, 1889.

was with this in view that he undertook a serious course of reading in connection with the weighty problem. He was preparing himself to convince others, and as his researches progressed, he found the theory of evolution answering the occult needs of his own mystic temperament ever more fully. His heart was filled with a joy that exalted, as before a revelation of God in Nature.

"I am writing in my study with a beautiful, freshly cut rose on the table before me," he tells his friend. "The perusal of works on Evolution, even of such as have been composed by gross materialists wherein I have no difficulty in distinguishing truth from error, is helping to broaden my conception of the Infinite Wisdom, of the laws that govern the universe and of the overwhelming guilt of man—that splendid fruit of the combined labours of heaven and earth that have been going on for millions of centuries—of man who violates the law and offends and denies the Almighty. I look into my own heart, into my sin-stained soul, and realize that, objectively, my own guilt is infinite. Then I remember the Word that is Love, the Word that is Forgiveness—I think of Christ, and my heart beats high with emotion, for, seated upon the right hand of Infinite Wisdom, I behold Infinite Mercy. Were God merely the Creator, even though His wisdom be infinite, what an imperfect God He would be! . . . Not even Le Conte's book seems to me to be entirely free from error, and his theory that the forces of Nature are the direct power of God, certainly needs modifying. But there are a few pages on physical and moral affliction as a necessary means towards perfection that strike me as very fine."¹

Thus did Fogazzaro pursue his researches "seeing nothing quite clearly," but guided by "many lightning flashes, many indications of a great light to come." Determined as he was to keep his opinions to himself until they should have assumed a more definite form in his own consciousness, he carefully guarded the secret of his studies, and it was not until December that he was ready to compose a lecture to which he proposed to give a "vague and somewhat pedantic title, as, for example, *Remarks on Certain Writings by Professor Le Conte.*"² His reason for this

¹ Letter to E——, Vicenza, September 18, 1889.

² *Ibid.*, December 3, 1889.

was that, being fully alive to the delicacy of the position he was assuming towards Italian believers, he wished to avoid all risk of attracting any one from mere motives of curiosity. This consideration also induced him to relinquish his original intention of accepting the invitation of the *Accademia Olimpica*, and instead adapt his lecture for delivery before the *Istituto Veneto*. The knowledge alone of his responsibility in attempting to deal with a question of such paramount importance caused him to hesitate, but the consciousness that he was seeking only the greater glory of God finally confirmed him in his purpose.

We to-day may find much to criticize in Fogazzaro's lectures, as we shall presently see. We may indeed discover much that is weak in his philosophic and scientific attitude, and even refuse to accept many of his conclusions, but one thing has never grown old in these studies of his, and that is the spirit of mysticism in which they were undertaken and which still pervades them, and we can but admire the intense fervour with which he sought God, that distinguishes him from both the materialists and theologians of his day. For to him—the poet and believer—had been vouchsafed a new vision of life, and with a thrill of sacred awe he recognized that his dwelling-place was not the well-ordered and definitely established little world of an extraneous Creator who looked down unmoved from His heaven, but a universe interpenetrated by currents of perennial life, a creation without limits either of time or space.

Regarded from the point of view of science these lectures contain nothing that is original, but in the history of religious thought in Italy they still bear important witness to the decisive advance of mystic consciousness beyond the limits of that literal traditionalism which had previously oppressed it. They mark the hour wherein a prescient spirit, albeit remaining within the Catholic fold, came to perceive divine action no longer in the days of miraculous happenings only, but above all in that never ending miracle whose wonder is proclaimed not only from star to star, as the ancient psalmist has it, but from atom to atom.

It was during the early months of the year 1891 that Antonio Fogazzaro began his propaganda in favour of the ideas which had now taken complete possession of him. On February 22, he

delivered his first lecture on the subject in Venice, at the *Istituto Veneto di Scienze e Lettere*, a lecture entitled *Per un recente raffronto delle teorie di S. Agostino e di Darwin circa la creazione* (concerning some recent comparisons between the Theories of St. Augustine and of Darwin with regard to Creation).

This lecture, delivered as it was to an Italian audience, could not fail to provoke much animated discussion and fierce opposition, for it was unpalatable alike to the timidly pious and to those intolerant of any possible reconciliation between modern thought and the doctrines of Christianity. Both believers and sceptics were scathing and bitter in their criticisms, and even in his own family circle Fogazzaro encountered somewhat of coldness and of tacit disapproval. But a few more generous souls there were who responded to his initiative with sympathy and confidence, and it was precisely at this time that the hand of a bishop was extended to him in the spirit of friendship and fatherly benevolence that would accompany him throughout his life. This was the hand destined to be raised in absolution above his death-bed—the hand of Monsignor Geremia Bonomelli.

A shining example of the true shepherd of souls was this Bishop of Cremona, an example worthy to be chronicled in the religious history of the nineteenth century! Born on September 22, 1831, at Nigoline near the Lake of Iseo, of poor parents who tilled the soil, he set out at an early date on the road that leads to the priesthood. At the age of twelve he assumed the habit, and received Holy Orders on June 2, 1855. At the Gregorian University in Rome, whither he was sent soon after his ordination, he acquired a thorough knowledge of dogmatic theology, and distinguished himself among his fellow-students for his exceptional talents and noble character. In 1866 he was given a professorship at the seminary in Brescia, and also appointed spiritual head of the parish of Lovere; and so rapidly did he rise in the general esteem, both as a writer and preacher, that on October 27, 1871, Pius IX., who had greatly admired a work of his entitled *Il giovone studente istruito e difeso nella dottrina cristiana*, created him Bishop of Cremona. As bishop of this small town in Lombardy his name was destined soon to become known as that of one of the most popular churchmen in Italy. Monsignor Bono-

melli became the symbol of reconciliation between the spirit of religion and that of patriotism. In fact, he represented in Italy the highest type of the liberal Catholic ecclesiastic. A disciple of Passaglia, he had been introduced to Gioberti's eminently Italian school of philosophy by that peculiar type of mystic, the little known writer, Bersi ; brought up from his youth on Montalembert, Lacordaire and Lamennais, he had inclined from the outset towards a conception of Catholicism embracing all of those aspirations towards freedom and the revelations of science which, condemned as they were, with unchristian severity, by members of the reactionary party, by the champions of what is old rather than of what is eternal, had paralysed all activity on the part of the Catholic of Bonomelli's day and country, reducing him to the state of one debarred from participation in the life and endeavours of his fellow-men. Very early in his career he had become aware of all the dangers arising from the attitude the clergy had assumed during the *Risorgimento*, an attitude which threatened to transform the national religion into a political party. But restrained by the obedience due to those who held political sway at Rome, he had never ventured to declare publicly in favour of the new order of things. On the contrary, his attitude throughout the closing years of the reign of Pius ix. had been such as to gain him the favour of the ultramontane faction. When Cardinal Manning came to Italy for the last time on his *ad limina* visit, Bonomelli had the good fortune to meet him. Manning was then passing through a moral crisis, and his views, now that his sun was about to set, were undergoing a great change. His was a loyal soul, and although he had heretofore represented the ultramontane tendency in England in opposition to the great Newman, he was now beginning to perceive the disastrous effects the Vatican's inflexible policy was having upon the spiritual welfare of the Church. His "spiritual testament" contains the strongest evidence in proof of the deep and whole-hearted nature of the transformation his views had undergone.¹ Cardinal Manning and the Bishop of Cremona met at the house of a prelate of high degree, and the Englishman spoke without reserve both of the views he held and of his forebodings. Bono-

¹ See E. S. Purcell, *Life of Cardinal Manning* (Macmillan, 1896).

melli having questioned him concerning his opinion of the protests on the part of the Holy See against Italy, the venerable priest replied with calm but firm conviction in the following terms : "The temporal power was decreed by Providence, and the faith of the people bestowed it upon the Pope. Departing faith is now depriving him of it. In the future God will ensure the liberty of the Church in the way that is best. Meanwhile the clergy must be careful not to confront the people with the difficult alternative of choosing between the national and religious sentiment. Should they be forced to choose to-day, they would undoubtedly pronounce in favour of the national sentiment."¹ He went on to express his views with regard to the future of the Papacy and the conditions of the Church much as he has set them forth in his "testament," referring openly to certain evils that afflict Catholicism, such as the ignorance of the clergy, sacramentalism, officialdom, uncharitable controversy, insufficient tolerance of the convictions of others on the part of the orthodox, the Jesuits, etc. etc. . . .

This conversation definitely determined the Bishop of Cremona's future action. On that day, he himself assured me, he awoke to the fact that a shepherd of souls was in duty bound to regard this Third Italy of ours with that sympathy and understanding without which the latent antagonism existing between the nation and the Church might easily develop into a tacit schism. Henceforth he became the champion of a union between religion and country in a contingency which, although the modern Italian now sees it but as a crisis that is past, constituted, at the time, a problem of very painful importance to many. In the course of the decade which extended from 1880 to 1890, when the contentions concerning the question of the temporal power appeared to wax more bitter as the grave dangers by which Italy was threatened increased ; when abstention on the part of Catholics from participation in political elections was carried to such an extent as actually to obstruct the country's union, Monsignor Bonomelli, carefully discriminating between what is

¹ These words of Cardinal Manning's were repeated to me by Monsignor Bonomelli himself, in the course of a long conversation during which I took the notes that have enabled me to compile these pages.—T. G. S.

Cæsar's and what is of God, stood for all that is purest in the traditional Catholicism of Italy. At a time when it required no little courage for a Bishop to publicly recognize Italian unity as definitely established, he it was who most enthusiastically welcomed his country's regeneration, who was the friend alike of her sovereigns and of her people, the champion of a reconciliation wherein the energies of all Italian peoples should co-operate with a religion at once ardent and austere, a religion made for men who labour and endeavour. With Cardinal Capecelatro and Monsignor Scalabrini he thus kept alive in the bosom of the Italian hierarchy, the grand tradition of liberal Catholicism—a glorious tradition, to which full justice will be done in days to come, even within the Church herself. But while various circumstances may concur in bestowing a wider fame upon Cardinal Capecelatro and pointing him out to future generations as one of the few great princes of the Church in our century—his superiority as a writer, the patrician dignity of his intellect and bearing which reflected both his noble descent and the existence in him of humanistic traditions, illumined by a firm belief in Gospel truth; while Monsignor Scalabrini, who is less famous, indeed, may be remembered as one of those of richest promise, one of the most manifestly conscientious of that band of ecclesiastics whom Rome failed to appreciate, the Bishop of Cremona will ever remain the best beloved and most popular of the three. He will take his place in history as the "good Bishop of the Third Italy," as the friend alike of prince and pauper, of the labourer and the statesman, of the believer and the sceptic, all of whom found a place in his great and generous heart, from which nothing was shut out that was human in the highest sense.

At that time only such a shepherd of souls as this could understand Fogazzaro and appreciate his efforts. Although differing from him in his philosophy (for Bonomelli was never a Rosminian), and while faithfully accepting the traditional interpretations of theology, the Bishop of Cremona's mind was benevolently open to all of those great questions that no mere formula can silence in the heart of modern man. That he was capable also of comprehending the thirst for beauty that lay in the depths of Fogazzaro's soul, he himself clearly reveals in the following words:

"I dream of a poet well versed in the science of Nature, possessing the genius of Dante and his faith, who should lead me through all the geological formations of the earth—from the primordial strata of Peru, up to the very nebulae themselves—the while he sang the praises of the works of Nature and of their Author. . . . The subject would be far more sublime than that either of the *Aeneid* or of the *Illiad*."¹

When Bonomelli had read the lecture he immediately dispatched the following letter to Fogazzaro :

"The man who composed these three-and-thirty pages on a problem so abstruse, a problem that has become the subject of so much profound study and learned discussion, and that causes party spirit to flame so hotly ; the man, I say, who is capable of throwing so much light upon it, of presenting it in a form so beautiful, and who furthermore succeeds in bringing two master-minds into agreement, must indeed be endowed with extraordinary talents. I am filled with admiration. . . . Your work contains many wise and beautiful thoughts, many high and unbiased pronouncements which I can but admire and seek to assimilate, but I am not brave enough to subscribe unreservedly to certain passages such, for example, as that taken from Le Conte on page 25. I am none the less conscious, however, of the importance of all such passages—of their grand and vital meaning. The subject of these pre-existent germs and the evolution they undergo calls for fuller elucidation, and this we look to you to supply. You have touched upon one of the most intricate points. . . . Science can but throw more light on dogma, and I, for my part, am not afraid. Some rather heated controversy has taken place between Monsabré and myself on the subject of the notes on page 8 of the third volume, wherein I maintain that the doctrine of transformation (*trasformismo*) does not in itself exclude either the existence of God or the fact of creation. It is, therefore, highly gratifying to me to find that you express yourself so strongly in support of the same argument. It is true enough that we Catholics are over-timid and that the rationalists are over-daring, but in time we shall succeed in lessening the distance that separates us, or at least in removing all sense of suspicion and hostility. The past is finding its continuation in the present. . . . Your valuable pages are full of

¹ Letter from Monsignor Bonomelli to A. Fogazzaro, Cremona, December 16, 1897.

weighty meaning, and demand further amplification if certain dangers are to be avoided and certain accusations silenced.”¹

Fogazzaro’s reply to this unexpected expression of approval constitutes a valuable document, because it clearly demonstrates his perfect honesty of purpose :

“ MONSIGNORE,—I beg your permission to address you as though I were on my knees at your side and opening my heart to you as your penitent. Even did I not reverence you as I do, as one of the faithful I should nevertheless wish to assume this attitude in addressing you, the Bishop. The thought that I should have clothed my essay in such language as to convey to others a false and exaggerated impression of my learning, fills me with dismay—the thought that I may have done this deliberately and for the purpose of gratifying my vanity and ambition. The numerous quotations I have inserted in my text may well lead to the conclusion that I have made a profound study of works which, as a matter of fact, I have but consulted *ad hoc*, while many passages which have served others before me, I have merely copied. Now the first part of your letter fills me with a sense of satisfaction so intense, so flattering, as to cause me some anxiety, both because I am forced to doubt the righteousness of this sentiment, and because I fear it may blind me to the real poverty of my own mind, which, on examination, I invariably find to be vacuous and weak, a condition due, in part, to a defective memory, in part to my unconquerable habits of procrastination. It is true that this essay was conceived and written in a spirit of firm conviction and with the honest desire to glorify God, but, alas, this good intention may have become sullied by vain and ambitious thoughts! One circumstance that powerfully stimulated me to write on the subject was the fact, not only of the overweening audacity, but also of the malevolence, ignorance and dishonesty of purpose of those evolutionists who hold and boldly preach that Christianity is already vanquished by the new theories. Such teachings can but lead to what I look upon as incalculable evil, and must strongly influence a certain class of intelligent and high-minded young men to whom the doctrine of evolution, recognized as it now is by the majority of men of science, must inevitably appeal. Had it not been for these propagandists I should very likely have obeyed the wise maxim, *Quieta non movere*; but such as

¹ Letter from Monsignor Bonomelli to A. Fogazzaro, Cremona, May 2, 1891.

they are ever seeking to undermine faith, even in the ignorant, by subtly insinuating that, as man is descended from the ape, that as all things are self-created and nothing has been created, all priests are consequently impostors. It was not my intention to blindly subscribe to Le Conte's theories with regard to the germs of the human soul, but only to state these theories as they stand, pointing out, at the same time, that the author might have derived much enlightenment from a careful study of the works of St. Augustine and of Rosmini. I intended to support the teachings of my faith and, while maintaining the specific difference between the two faculties, point out the possibility of a *superadditio maoris perfectionis*, such as the revelation to the sentimental faculty of what is now become intelligible, a revelation which would modify the nature of that faculty as the addition of a unit modifies the nature of a number. I am in doubt, Monsignore, whether that which seems to you of gravest import in the concluding pages, be the interpretation I have placed upon the passage from the Epistle to the Romans or some other point. I was perfectly easy in my mind about it, relying as I did upon the authority of the commentators, from whom I have quoted, although I was well aware that others have sought to limit to the present life the significance of St. Paul's mysterious and sublime words. Or were you, perhaps, thinking of the analogy I mention as existing between Evolution and Christianity, with its dogma of a spiritualized human shape in a future state; with its moral teachings which aim at combatting man's lower instincts? I confess that both my reason and my sentiment are strongly imbued with these things; but none the less am I determined always to submit myself to correction at the hands of those in authority over me. And now, Monsignore, while I take this opportunity of expressing to you my profound gratitude for your great kindness, let me also beg you to remember me in your prayers, and to continue to regard me with that benevolence which is so precious to me. . . .”¹

Such was the beginning of a heart-to-heart correspondence between the bishop and the poet, a correspondence that will serve us as an unerring guide in tracing the secret workings of Fogazzaro's conscience during this period, and enable us to comprehend the subsequent development of his religious thought and attitude.

¹ Letter from A. Fogazzaro to Monsignor Bonomelli, Vicenza, May 4, 1891.

Meanwhile, stimulated by the very disputes and criticisms to which his first discourse had given rise, Fogazzaro had determined to appeal to a more numerous public by means of a second lecture entitled *Per la Bellezza di una Idea* (For the Beauty of an Idea), which he delivered at the *Ateneo Veneto*, on May 2, 1892. In this treatise it was essentially the artist and the mystic who spoke. By tracing the development of the idea of evolution he finally arrived at the necessity of recognizing, together with the principle of natural and sexual selection, the creative principle as well—God ; but no longer as He is portrayed in the Book of Genesis to peoples in their infancy, as the artificer of a universe put together piece by piece, as a being speaking “ by word of mouth and in a loud voice,” but as an organizing intelligence, working not from without but inwardly, not at intervals but continuously, by means of an action which we call *laws*, and for a *purpose* and according to a plan of which our reason has but a vague inkling. Thus did Fogazzaro lead his hearers to the theological conception of the universe. But his theology was not that which holds that the peacock’s feathers have been gloriously coloured for the sole purpose of delighting the eye of man. His was the broader theology which esteems that every created thing has its manifold and various purposes ; that such purposes combine in forming broad designs themselves destined to be co-involved in others of still vaster proportions which, in turn, form but parts of the one, all-encompassing scheme. He perceived the exalted position occupied by man in this vast and divine scheme, man whom all the forces of Nature have been working to evolve since the beginning of the first nebulae ; man, destined to achieve unlimited spiritual development in time to come, by force of those very laws through which he emerged from primal matter. As a poet, therefore, Fogazzaro felt bound to stand forth in defence of this glorious idea which threw so much sudden light upon a mystery so profound.

Its author was aware, however, that his second lecture had also failed to make his view sufficiently clear, and three months later we find him writing :

“ I have decided to make the ‘ Preparation of Man ’ the subject of a third lecture, and endeavour to convey some sense

of the glorious beauty of the divine scheme. It is also my intention to deliver this lecture wherever it may be possible to do so, and this notwithstanding my innate aversion to public speaking. I must begin at once to read only what is relevant to this theme. In thus labouring for the greater glory of God I believe I am conforming to the most essential law of the universal scheme. I am aware that my knowledge is but scant, and when I read works by others on this problem I fully realize my own inferiority as regards power of intellect, freshness of imagination and novelty of views. But I hope and believe that God will lend me that which I ask of Him with all my heart and in humble consciousness of my own unworthiness.”¹

In reply to some words of encouragement received from Monsignor Bonomelli, he wrote :

“ I shall continue to study in order to develop my theme as thoroughly as possible, working always for the greater glory of God. I should like, indeed, to treat different aspects of the subject in separate lectures, all tending towards the final conclusion that a rational teleology of the universe can but confirm the words of the Gospel, *ut manifestentur opera Dei*—words that may also explain the continuous, vague developments of created intelligence. As for the origin of the spirit, I shall never seek it in matter ; on the contrary, I shall always firmly maintain that it is not to be found therein. It is as impossible to explain it as to explain the origin of life itself. This consideration might lead to a further Gospel parallel in the words *spiritus et vita* ; and the significant utterance, *spiritus ferebatur super aquas*, surely contains much hidden meaning. You must take all this in the spirit in which I write it down, in a letter and on the spur of the moment ; for I am firmly grounded only in what concerns the faith that is strong within me—all the rest must be made the subject of long and patient study.”²

Fogazzaro emerged from a period of silent meditation to deliver in Rome his lecture on *The Origin of Man and the Religious Sentiment*. Of the three lectures this one received the most attention from the Press, for not only had Fogazzaro been invited

¹ Letter to E——, Velo, August 8, 1892.

² Letter from A. Fogazzaro to Monsignor Bonomelli, Valsolda, September 10, 1892.

to address the members of the *Societa per l'Istruzione della Donna* (Society for promoting the higher education of women), which was then just beginning to flourish, but Her Majesty the Queen had desired to be present on the occasion (*Collegio Romano*, March 2, 1893). Extraneous motives of curiosity had thus combined to focus the attention alike of believers and sceptics, of priests and laymen upon the Vicentine novelist, and this fact must account for various defects in the lecture itself. All too frequently do I detect in it the disturbing accents of the orator who, conscious that he is addressing a fashionable audience whose approval he desires to win, ends by reducing "scientific and philosophical difficulties of a most intricate description" to "a question of taste and sentiment."

This lecture was repeated in most of the principal cities of Italy, and everywhere aroused both enthusiastic applause and bitter criticism. The first attack came from the ultramontane faction, and the tocsin was sounded by the *Osservatore Cattolico* (March 16-17). Its criticism was so severe that Fogazzaro's friends began to fear that, instigated by the clerical press, the ecclesiastical authorities would feel obliged to interfere. It was at this moment that Fogazzaro received the following letter from the Bishop of Cremona :

" I am following you with the liveliest interest in your journeys and lecturings. I rejoice at the ovations of which you are the object, and I fully appreciate your exceptional powers of mind, your noble spirit and the high ideals you are pursuing with such unflagging perseverance. Nevertheless, I am too fond of you not to fear for you. I am well aware that a *formidable group* are making you the object of their attacks and of abusive criticism. It is true that, as a layman, you enjoy a far greater freedom than would any churchman in your position, but, after all, you are a devout Catholic, and as such are now exposed to grave danger. Your frank and noble protestations of Catholic convictions will, I fear, prove but a very inadequate shield. As matters now stand, those dashes of Rosminian philosophy, which your lecture contains, constitute, alas! a serious danger in themselves. You are well acquainted with the power of the Catholic press (an ill-applied adjective!). They will say in the Catholic world : ' Fogazzaro is a liberal, a disciple of Rosmini,

a Darwinist ; that is more than sufficient to prove him a heretic as well.' "¹

Bonomelli foresaw the probability that, should the lecture appear in print, it would immediately be placed on the Index, and, to avoid this, suggested that it be first submitted for examination to one whose position was sufficiently exalted to enable him to defend it. The prelate he proposed was Cardinal Capecelatro.

" Words fail me to express my gratitude to you," Fogazzaro wrote. " It shall be as you desire. To Cardinal Capecelatro, who recently received me at Capua with every mark of kindness, as well as to you yourself I will submit that portion of my lecture which deals with the relation between the hypothesis of evolution and Catholic doctrine, and which may give rise to censure. In Rome I had the satisfaction of learning that Campello, Crispolti and other Catholics, among whom there was also a churchman, approved of my address. Crispolti told me that it seemed to him to be more guarded and to contain less matter for censure than its immediate predecessor. The alarm was raised by the *Osservatore* of Milan. . . . But I am reminded that there will be a difficulty to be overcome, for the lecture contains these words : ' Were I a churchman I should be more careful about compromising myself in favour of the doctrine of human evolution. This is still but a hypothesis, and the Church is under no obligation to pronounce in favour of any hypothesis of science. This is not her affair. It is for Science to prove the truth of her own hypotheses.' This passage renders it impossible for me to seek either your approbation or that of any other prelate. Nor, indeed, am I anxious to do so. I crave but freedom to discuss the subject. But will Capecelatro, will any other judge . . . even one higher in authority than he . . . be willing to grant such freedom ? Will they not feel that, by so doing, they themselves are, in a way, sanctioning the thesis. As you know, the clerical press of Rome expressed no opinion on the matter. This silence on the part of the Church seems to me to be both opportune and desirable for the time being. At all events I will send some extracts to you and to Capecelatro and perhaps also to others as well." "²

¹ Letter from Monsignor Bonomelli to Fogazzaro, Cremona, March 17, 1893.

² Letter from A. Fogazzaro to Monsignor Bonomelli, Vicenza, March 21, 1893.

Thus does the splendid figure of the Archbishop of Capua appear upon the stage of Fogazzaro's life. The Catholic writer and the patriotic prelate were indeed fully capable of mutual understanding. The Cardinal was a worthy representative of that living current of manly, generous sentiments which had inspired a portion of the clergy during the *Risorgimento*. A writer of distinction whom Carducci himself admired, of noble birth and nobler still in spirit, he was the splendid embodiment of that truly Italian piety whose most distinguished representatives he had extolled in his writings ; of that sober piety, whose ardent impulses are held in check by a sense of moderation, peculiar to the Latin race. Without possessing the rebellious nature, the restless imagination and poetic temperament of his great friend, Padre Tosti, he was yet capable of much firmness and determination in sustaining certain opinions which clashed with the Vatican policy. But while, with Bonomelli, he represented a current of opposition to the inflexible attitude of the Pope, he nevertheless resembled Leo XIII. in the possession of that humanistic temperament which would have rendered it impossible for the Pontiff himself to tolerate a conception of the Church as closed against science, history and art, and consequently debarred from participation in the magnificent achievements of thought and civilization. In appealing to Capecelatro as Bonomelli had advised, Fogazzaro was placing himself in the hands of one uncompromising indeed as regards Catholic orthodoxy, but capable nevertheless of appreciating all the exigencies of the search for Truth—in the hands of an enemy of any hasty and fear-inspired condemnation that, in the name of the Faith, might obstruct the march of science.

In weighing Fogazzaro's arguments and intentions, Capecelatro was inspired by the same spirit of sympathetic interest as that in which Newman had dealt with Mivart. He made no secret of his opinion that, as regards philosophy and theology, Fogazzaro was "insufficiently prepared for so bold an undertaking."¹ But neither did he hide his own willingness to envisage the grave problem without any false sense of repugnance. His reply in acknowledgment of the manuscript Fogazzaro had sent him was

¹ Letter from Filippo Crispolti to A. Fogazzaro, Bologna, March 28, 1893.

reassuring, but obviously guarded. To Bonomelli, Fogazzaro wrote as follows concerning it :

“ The Cardinal’s answer arrived at the very moment when I was being shown a letter from Naples to the *Italia Reale*, which is one long invective against me. He writes that his insufficient knowledge (I quote faithfully !) and the office he holds make it impossible for him to *assume any responsibility*. He adds that my essay appears to him to be free from error. ‘ I believe and hope,’ he says, ‘ that it will not be considered necessary to forbid the lecture ’ ; but he warns me that one can never be sure of anything, and that the Holy Office is at liberty to condemn a work even though it contain no error, if it be considered as constituting a stumbling-block for the uncultured. He goes on to praise my public profession of Catholic belief, and this in words that are very precious to me. On the whole I could not have hoped for a more comforting reply. Out of regard for the cardinal, who but three weeks since received me with so much kindness at Capua, I shall discuss his letter only with my closest friends. He returns me my manuscript with but a single marginal note, at the point where I have declared that the ideal state of man is not that of innocence in which he must originally have found himself. I will correct the passage, leaving the groundwork of my idea intact . . . it is a sort of *felix culpa* ! ”¹

Monsignor Bonomelli’s examination of the manuscript led him to make more numerous objections. He felt that he could unreservedly endorse the first part of the lecture wherein its author treats of the human body ; but the latter part that deals with the soul was another matter. This doctrine of the soul developing on parallel lines with the body and becoming human when the construction of the brain is completed, and then receiving the *principle of truth* that is its *natural object*, seemed to him to be but another version of the doctrine already condemned in Rosmini.

“ Either this natural *object of the intellect* is God, and it is God Who shapes the human soul, in which case God Himself is the natural object of the human intellect (albeit this is a false doctrine and one already condemned), or this natural object is not God,

¹ Letter from A. Fogazzaro to Monsignor Bonomelli, Vicenza, April 1, 1893.

and the human soul is produced without His intervention. On the other hand, what is it that God creates, if the soul's substance already exist, and it be but a question of placing an object before it? The object placed before it does not alter the soul's nature. It is still there in its first state, and may appear as a substance which, after all, is common to all beings, a non-spiritual substance . . . but tell me what it really is, if you can! We may admit that the human soul is developed by degrees, but God alone, by an act of creation, can produce its substance, both simple and spiritual.”¹

In his reply Fogazzaro sought to refute these objections.

“ I have always heard the origin of the human soul attributed to an act of creation. You have seen that in my manuscript I have substituted the words *is created human* for the words *becomes human*. This I did in order to avoid confusion. But such is my gratitude to you and so profound my respect for your opinions, that I will do as you desire. I am willing to refrain from publishing such passages as are reminiscent of the Rosminian hypothesis. . . . The groundwork of my idea is merely this, that I see in everything the direct and continuous workings of the omnipresent Divine Will. It creates souls and bodies alike; its method is Evolution; but to me this does not mean that it endows substance with the faculty of self-evolution; the Divine Will directly promotes and accompanies this development; every act of evolution is in reality an act of creation.”²

But while willing enough to listen to just criticism and, after much study and meditation, to correct both his opinions and his writings, Fogazzaro was by no means willing to relinquish his fundamental idea. He was convinced of the correctness of his views. He would not have rebelled had the Church condemned him, but her condemnation would not have persuaded him to renounce opinions he held to be accurate. “ I am well aware that I am laying myself open to censure from those high in authority,” he wrote.

“ According to information I have received privately from Capcelatro as well as to what d'Hulst says in the article to which

¹ Letter from Monsignor Bonomelli to A. Fogazzaro, Cremona, March 31, 1893.

² Letter from A. Fogazzaro to Monsignor Bonomelli, Vicenza, Easter, 1893.

you refer and of which I possess a copy, the mere fact that a book is forbidden does not necessarily signify that it contains errors of doctrine. The Holy Office may simply be acting for reasons of expediency. Therefore, even should my work be condemned, I should not feel obliged to make any declarations implying renunciation of my thesis. *On the other hand, I should refuse to authorize any new editions of the pamphlet, and should not hesitate to make known the fact of this refusal and its motives.* I have already signed a contract with the publisher which I cannot cancel; but I believe the present edition will be exhausted within a few months. Meanwhile let me console myself with those words of Capuccelatro's, which I greatly treasure. 'I believe and hope,' he says, 'that it will not be considered necessary to forbid your lecture.' Remember that Capuccelatro had read that doubtful passage as it stood originally! I shall probably never again write, much less publish anything concerning the origin of the soul. Perhaps some day I may handle the subject indirectly, treating of God's action in creation, a theme which strongly tempts me, but which calls for protracted and careful preparation. Certainly, as far as the defence of Christianity is concerned, the question of the soul's origin, grave indeed in itself, is not urgent, for never will science be able to prove anything concerning it nor advance anything more positive than probabilities and likelihoods."¹

This letter clearly demonstrates that Fogazzaro's state of mind was identical with that in which, many years later, he would face a difficult position with regard to Church discipline.

He was, however, already confronted by the same uncompromising opponents who would one day suffocate his voice and impede his religious activities. In a series of articles in the *Civiltà Cattolica* (October 15-31, 1893) the Jesuits assumed a belligerent attitude. More significant, however, than their scathing but not always unjust criticism, was the underlying spirit of antagonism they displayed against a "layman who, all unauthorized, presumed to teach other church members what is or is not to be believed, and what view of creation they are henceforth to take in order to form a more worthy conception of the Creator. . . ." In Fogazzaro's attitude the *Civiltà Cattolica* saw defiance of "the most essential point in church

¹ Letter from A. Fogazzaro to Monsignor Bonomelli, Vicenza, May 9, 1893.

discipline," and this at the very moment when, in an open letter addressed to Professor Billia, wherein he protested against the attacks by the Jesuits, he had claimed freedom for pious laymen to defend their own beliefs in so far as they did not compromise the authority of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. As yet the altercation had not overstepped the bounds of courtesy, but henceforth the rupture was irremediable. With the acute logic of scholasticism the compilers of the *Civiltà Cattolica* very probably foresaw in Fogazzaro's views and teachings that which they would be called upon to combat fifteen years later, namely, the participation of the laity in the life of the Church and the inevitable effect of the doctrine of evolution on the interpretation of dogma. The statical and dynamical conceptions of Catholicism were already confronting each other. To convince oneself of this, one has but to peruse the following letter addressed to Gaetano Negri—an opponent of a very different type—who had recently sent Fogazzaro his book entitled *Rumori Mondani*.

" . . . I thank you for your welcome gift. I was already acquainted with some of these essays, but you can imagine with what eagerness I turned to the chapter on *Religious and Philosophical Thought in Italy*. I read it with the greatest attention and liveliest interest. You have done me the honour to remember me among so many men of vast learning; you have lavished praise upon me of which I feel I am unworthy. But for all of this I am grateful, and my heart rejoices in the knowledge of the kind intentions that inspired these praises, for it is indeed true that to but few am I drawn as I am to you. Precisely, however, because you have some esteem for me, you will have no difficulty in believing me, my dear Negri, when I tell you that you would have made me happy had you said, 'Fogazzaro has been presumptuous in attempting to grapple with problems that are beyond his reach, and which he was but ill-prepared to handle. His works are mere abortions, mere empty poetry, but the views he has so unskilfully championed have a future!' For if in your inmost heart you deem me presumptuous you are not mistaken, and so indeed do I regard myself. I mean that I doubt my own ability to support my thesis. The strength of my conviction has stimulated me to speak and write that more may be spoken and written, that what is the subject of impassioned discussion elsewhere may also come to be discussed

here in Italy ; and could my little spark but kindle a great flame, I would not complain even were I myself cast out and trodden under foot as a thing of no further use. As regards your agnosticism, I will not discuss it here. You are certainly well acquainted with the major part of the arguments against it, and so I will only say that I cherish great hopes that help will come to you from *Sirius*, as I know you sometimes appeal to him ! But I feel bound to entreat you to re-examine your opinions concerning the immovability of Catholicism ; to examine whether within Catholicism itself, not dogma but the interpretation of dogma be not undergoing a continuous process of evolution ; I must beg you to ascertain whether within Catholicism itself there be not, besides the force that tends to preserve ancient forms, a force that tends to produce new ones, and whether the very things you write of Rosmini and of others, do not go to prove this ; whether a partial condemnation have indeed destroyed the fruits of Rosmini's labours ; whether this absolute immovability be not merely the tendency, the programme of a party in the Church ; whether this party be not composed of the Italian element in particular, of the Latin element in general ; whether in Germany, England and America it be not a very vital and living Catholicism which speaks and acts, and that, imbued as it is with the spirit of modernity, is regarded neither with liking nor approval by Rome, but is nevertheless tolerated and respected by her. After all, of the Latin peoples we ourselves and the Spanish are the worst. Pray read an article in the *Correspondant* of January 25 of the present year, by Bishop d'Hulst. It will show you what living currents of thought there are in the Church, and also that the best Catholics recognize and deplore that very neglect of the Bible by the faithful which you declare is essential to the existence of Catholicism. Bishop d'Hulst's article caused a mighty stir in the Vatican, and I happen to know that they would have liked to condemn him ; but what of that ? It simply shows that, in the hierarchy of the Church there are unfortunately many who are neither over wise nor over religious ; but this is not the Church—this is not Catholicism ! Besides, the article was not condemned. The closing lines are beautiful—beautiful and touching. But do not fancy that we endeavour to imprison the Infinite within an enclosure of stone, nor that we seek absolution from mere humans.”¹

These pages contain the earliest germs of the future position

¹ Letter from A. Fogazzaro to Gaetano Negri, Vicenza, November 26, 1893.

the author of *The Saint* was destined to assume. They already show his conviction that, whereas everything in the universe is striving from imperfection towards perfection, the Church also is participating in this divine ascension ; that she also is a living organism containing a leavening power which impels her in the direction of " new forms " ; that in her also there is what Newman called a progressive *development*. And here we see where and how Fogazzaro's ideas of Catholic reform became ingrafted upon his convictions concerning evolution. The main features of the religious trend of the latter part of his life were already established, and if at that moment the dread sentence of the Holy Office had been passed upon his pamphlet it would have found him in precisely the same state of mind in which it found him on the condemnation of *The Saint*. But the pamphlet escaped condemnation.

We have now passed in review all the difficulties which Fogazzaro encountered in his efforts to reconcile his faith with the teachings of science. It would therefore be no difficult task to point out in his speeches those passages which now strike us as mistaken or incorrect. His conception of science differed from our own. His trust in science differed from that of him who deems it " but a means of questioning Nature," rather than an absolute knowledge of things. Not being a scientist, he spoke as a poet, mistakenly believing that a question so grave, so complex, so delicate might be resolved into one of sentiment and good taste, fit to be discussed before an audience in which the feminine element predominated. He believed that the beauty of an idea was sufficient proof of its truth ; that the strong wing of sentiment can bear one beyond those dark voids which science crosses but slowly, painfully and by dint of much patient study. As a consequence he was lured into the same dangerous errors into which—albeit for different reasons—those materialists had fallen who declared that " where facts are wanting there is room for that science which rests upon sentiment " (Virchow). Fogazzaro failed to see that through the door he had opened, Haeckel himself might pass, asserting the *beauty* of *his own* idea in support of the theory of monistic construction.

Fogazzaro might well have become a poet of Evolution. Had he dared and attempted a song such as Browning puts upon the lips of Paracelsus, he would certainly have become what he sought to be—the artist-herald of a new conception of life's origin. Only a poet, indeed, may venture to assume that a thing is true merely because he feels its beauty, and because his sense of the beautiful does not often lead him astray. But Fogazzaro committed the error of confounding the reasonings of science with the voices of inspiration, of fighting a battle, which was a noble thing in itself, with weapons that were not his own, and that he consequently handled awkwardly and with difficulty.

While readily admitting the justice of many of the criticisms he encountered on all sides, we must nevertheless recognize the value of his writings on evolution in so much as they came as a challenge to the two belligerents who held the field of contention. It is to Fogazzaro's honour that he was the first Catholic in Italy fully to realize, in defiance of positivism, that the theory of evolution in itself could signify neither pure mechanical action nor brute material necessity; to realize that, on the other hand, the theory was of such a nature as, sooner or later, and all opposition notwithstanding, to dominate not only the entire realm of science, but by indirect means, influence our purposes and views of life as well. While seeking to prove that this new doctrine did not signify negation of the idea of creation, of liberty and of Providence, he pointed out the line religious sentiment must adopt in order to avoid a collision with science. We are well aware that this eagerness of his to bring about harmonious relations between religion and scientific research has seemed to some to imply a want of faith, almost, indeed, a seeking for outward support of an inner conviction that was not strong. Especially scathing accusations of this sort have but recently been brought against him by idealists and by the more or less honestly convinced supporters of Ritschlian dualism, to whom religion appears but a matter of faith and not of *knowledge*, a sentiment enclosed within the sacred precincts of conscience and debarred from contact with all that is philosophical or scientific. But against such accusations we must earnestly

protest. To us Fogazzaro's merit appears to consist precisely in the fact that he did not yield to that false mysticism which places the object of its faith in a tabernacle sealed against all intellectual perplexities, against all progress; that he realized the dangers which threaten religion when, falling back upon itself and seeking to be autonomous and purely internal, it becomes either an elusive myth or a story that is told and that possesses no point of contact with the life of man. Many years before he had read the book of that French philosopher whom he so ardently admired towards the close of his life, Fogazzaro himself might well have been the author of the following words: "The century in which we live is one of examination and comparison. It is therefore, by seeking to reconcile its rights with the clearly defined rights of science, and, if need be, by adapting itself without altering its main principle, to those demands of science which have been recognized as legitimate, that religion will succeed in manifesting its utility and its powers of development."¹ Fogazzaro's faith in science was accompanied by a still stronger faith in the powers of religion to assimilate and harmonize, and was in steadfast opposition to that fatal dualism that regards man as divisible into categories—making of him a double-faced Janus, who sees heaven and earth with different eyes. To all who have carefully examined his mode of thought he has made clear his conviction that man must be *entire* in his faith, that every movement of his spirit must be dedicated to his faith, that the true believer is not a fraction but a whole, and that a religious conscience may not close itself to any of life's riches, but must rather trustfully lay itself open to them. Brought face to face with the theory of evolution he perceived that, as a Christian, he must not seek a refuge for his faith beyond the realms of understanding, but, in obedience to the grand tradition of Catholicism, strive to reconcile the religious life with the scientific views of his century.

In this also he had the honour of being among the first to declare that the law of evolution was better suited to explain to modern man God's manner of operating, than was that theory of creation within a limited space of time, by leaps, bounds and

¹ Em. Boutroux, *Science et Religion*.

flashes, which had been well calculated to satisfy human sentiment and understanding in its primitive state. He saw that, whereas science might be opposed to a divine power that was active only here and there, and, discovering no traces of such intermittent omnipotence, be led to deny its existence, it could never refuse to accept the conception of a God operating without pause, universally, in every atom as in every spirit, in all space as in every living organism, in each part and in every whole, within and without, in action and reaction, in change and in strife. It seemed to him indeed, that it was precisely this idea of evolution which, by laying hold upon modern thought, would eventually wean it from the letter of the Jewish story of creation and lead it towards the Christian conception of the Father, of the God of Christ. It seemed to him that the scientist, while denying that any one of the series of *fiat* was to be found in the great book of Nature, was but opening to the faithful those vast horizons of unending Divine Action, in whose light and might all creatures have their beginning and their being, in whose sphere move alike the remotest star and the sparrow of the hedgerow.

In this sense Fogazzaro may well have felt that he was in very truth labouring for the greater glory of God. Although, indeed, his name may find no place in the annals of the scientific study of evolution, it will remain enrolled in those of religious thought. In the Church and among thinking Christians Antonio Fogazzaro's views have been quietly spreading. To many Evolution no longer signifies negation of a Creator, but "the only means of expressing the action of God in the organization of the universe."¹ His personal conviction has also gained ground that a truly Christian concept of God need not deny "within the limits of creation, every probable form of Epigenesis, provided always that such Epigenesis or Evolution content itself with being, not the all-sufficing cause or final reason, but simply the description of a process."² The theory of evolution thus interpreted ceases to clash with belief in any way. Introspection makes it clear to us that this theory does not even cloud our sacred and jealously treasured sense of the soul's divine

¹ Letter from A. Naville to A. Fogazzaro, Geneva, July 10, 1893.

² Von Hügel, *Eternal Life*.

origin, nor what is sublimely poetical and eternally true in the Bible story of the creation of man. For while we may unreservedly recognize the process of evolution as described by science, we nevertheless still continue to feel in this clay of ours which has passed through the fire of all that is Life, and upon which Nature has been at work since the beginning of time, that which, so long as the lips of man shall stammer the name of God on earth, will be called "His Breath." We still believe in that sacred moment wherein the first man awoke to the consciousness of the freedom bestowed upon his own spirit and withheld from lower nature, and wherein he looked out upon the world with that amazement Michael Angelo alone has been able to express in the eyes of his Adam who, rising from the embrace of mother earth, languid still, and as yet, it would seem, but partially freed from the encompassing clay, already strains upward towards the Creator Who is calling him.

CHAPTER XI

AN ASCETIC INTERLUDE

THE eternal city has a hundred gates, and each one of us may enter it by a different way if only we advance steadfastly towards Truth. Even scientific research may lead to that state of exaltation of the higher faculties, to that detachment from our material, everyday interests which gives us the sensation of being raised up into a higher sphere of life. To Fogazzaro the idea of evolution possessed this power of uplifting. To him the period during which he devoted himself to the study of Darwin's hypothesis was one of the most intensely vital of his spiritual experience.

The same may be said of his poetic sense. He began at this time to see the world with different eyes, to listen to its occult voices in a new frame of mind. What had once been to him but a passing dream became reality, namely, that man is no stranger to the life of the grasses, to the life of the waters. With a shudder of solemn awe he recognized the fact of his own affinity with all creatures. From the heights illumined by the spirit, out of the noonday fulness of the life that is man's, the poet could gaze into the twilight depths of nature with a thrill of religious emotion, could stoop to all living things with a comprehension that was almost fraternal. The inferior states, the lower grades of life through which he had slowly mounted towards the revealing flash, now reflected the light of his triumphant humanity.

But while his meditations induced him to listen to the voices of the wind and of swaying branches with an attention that contained much of pious awe, more attentively still did he listen to the voices that spoke in his own heart, wherein it seemed to him that a titanic struggle was still raging between the supernatural powers of animalism and the spirit's new mode of thought. The doctrine of evolution had shed a sudden light upon the world within him. The torturing problem of renunciation seemed at

last to have found a solution in the immanent and universal law of progress.

When he looked into his own inner world, made up of base passions and high aspirations, when he examined his lower instincts and the yearnings of his spirit, the thought of evolution suggested to him that it lay indeed within the power of his own will to take either the upward or the downward path, to be more animal or more human. He might go forward or backward ; slip downward into those stages of animalism he had already surmounted, or march onward towards new horizons, shaking off the trammels of all fleshly lusts, freeing his wings from all that is base and cruel. Religious asceticism did but point the way in which he must subdue himself, the way that would lead to those mysterious spheres of higher humanity. The commandment that imposes purity was no mere superstition ; it was the inner admonition that when the human in man conquers the animal, then also does love become more than mere sensual delight.

His writings at this period consequently form but the chronicle of an ascetic life, a life dominated by the purpose of ascension through purification. This condition is the result of keen and profound introspection on the part of one who possessed in a very remarkable degree the power of probing the depths of his own heart and discovering therein every hidden root of evil.

I have chosen some of the most significant passages from Fogazzaro's private journal for insertion here.

FROM THE PRIVATE JOURNAL

June 26, 1888.—Certain writings of St. Jerome and a chapter by Naville I have just been perusing show me to what holiness the monastic life may lead—a life of manual labour, of fasting and prayer. I am well aware, indeed, that such an existence would never have suited me, but I can readily understand its attraction for certain temperaments. I tell myself that it would not be impossible to lead the monastic life while remaining in the world, to lead a life hidden from all, following the example of that saintly man of whom the Gospels tell—anointing and adorning oneself while praying inwardly ; toiling on by sheer strength of purpose even when flesh and spirit alike rebel ; seeking not to detach oneself from one's fellow-men, but only

from earthly delights. I can imagine such a life, but I recognize my own inability ever to live it from lack of firm determination of purpose.

Vicenza, September 8, 1889.—I have renewed all our vows to the Almighty. I have placed all our present joys, our purest and most innocent delights in the Lord's hands. No offering it is in my power to make could be more worthy of His acceptance. Even though He deprive us of what He Himself has bestowed, yet will we bless His name. If we are but constant in our love for Him, He cannot separate us, for we shall be united in Him as the waters of two streams, divided by a great distance, are united in the sea.

January 16, 1890.—My consciousness of my own guilt has become less keen, but this does not mean that my moral life has improved. It points rather to decadence, to moral regression, to an enfeebled sensibility. A superficial perusal of a French book, the *Memoirs* of a certain Mademoiselle Bashkirtseff, has sufficed to encompass my spirit with that parching atmosphere of worldliness that shrivels the germs of all that is good. The book, indeed, contains nothing that is evil, but it is so full of desire, of pictures of earthly happiness, as to upset head and heart alike. What is the true state of my soul? . . . I am very restless to-night.

January 17, 1890.—To-day I resumed my perusal of Mademoiselle Bashkirtseff's book, telling myself that I was reading it only in the interests of my art, and all the while doubting my own sincerity. As a matter of fact, it is a work in which any artist must be deeply interested. It is a dangerous book for me, however, because, although the *moral* being has little by little, and up to a certain point, gained the upper hand in me, and displays a frigid and unmoved exterior, beneath the surface he is still convulsed and shaken by the onslaughts of the *immoral* being, who seeks freedom from all restraint for his animal passions, would fain surround himself with all the refinements of luxury and exercise his wit on any topic, regardless alike of the laws of kindness and of decency. This second being finds the first extremely tiresome, cold and foolish, and upon him the effect of a book such as the one in question is to make him clamour more loudly. Nevertheless, I am determined to subdue him once more.

January 19, 1890.—To-night my mind teems with ideas for literary work—for poetry dealing with evolution and plans for works of fiction. My novel strikes me as somewhat cold after

Mademoiselle Bashkirtseff, who lures me towards more modern and worldly scenes. Her book at least sets a good example of sincerity. But is it wise to be too sincere? Should I confess how often I am puffed up with a sense of pride I find it difficult to suppress, that I sometimes fail utterly to suppress indeed, but which I carefully hide beneath utterances that are all modesty? Should I tell of the feverish sensualism that so frequently inflames my imagination, although I am always prating of purity, and my readers believe me to be better than other men in this respect?

March 13, 1890.—I intend to be more assiduous and precise in compiling these notes. But how weak and fleeting are my good intentions! God knows our reasons for longing for release from the flesh are strong enough, but when we think of the judgment, we must all tremble. One would fain have subdued the flesh more thoroughly, have made it one's slave before appearing before the Almighty. It is strange that while I am becoming ever more detached from the world and find it ever more vain and detestable, my flesh should continue to fight against me and weigh so heavily upon my spirit. This means that my state of detachment is less complete than it appears—that it is the result, perhaps, of conceit and vanity. Did I but know how to use my present state to rid myself of pride and convince myself of my own nothingness! This conviction I am given to proclaiming loudly, and I also bear it upon the *lips of my heart*, so to speak, but it does not really exist in the depths of my being, where dumb instinct reigns, powerful and untamed. A stupid instinct this, for even did my spirit contain somewhat of good, would it be of my own creating? My will only is my own, and each day I find it becoming more perverse, more enfeebled and deserving of scorn.

June 13, 1890 (8 A.M.).—Cor mundum crea in nobis Domine et spiritum rectum innova in visceribus nostris. . . . Lord, in whom we believe and whose existence we feel, listen, we beseech Thee, to the prayer we unite in addressing to Thee. Detach our hearts from the things of this world; cause our spirits to turn to Thee in every contingency; be Thou sanctified in us and suffer not that any evil sentiment mingle with the love that binds us to Thee and unites our souls. Prepare in us that future beauty that surpasses anything we are able to picture, and, above all, cause us to labour for Thy glory, for a true understanding of Thy beauty, and that Thy will may be accomplished. Bestow upon us, O Lord, the immense boon of seeing Thy light reflected in the

spirits of those of our household whom we love. *Cor mundum crea in nobis Domine et spiritum rectum innova in visceribus nostris.*

October 26, 1891.—It seems to me that, through the humiliating revelation of my own weakness, the Lord intends to lead me to a state of mind in which I shall realize my own insignificance (albeit without bitterness), and give myself up unreservedly to His inexhaustible mercy. The perusal of a French work on asceticism has enlightened me concerning the true nature of the remorse I have heretofore experienced for my sins and weaknesses. It has now been brought home to me that such remorse was largely human—that it consisted largely of mortification at finding myself so weak and cowardly, and so sensibly lowered in my own esteem. Such remorse, moreover, has tended to discourage me, to minimize that necessary and saving trust in the Divine Mercy, the trust which must determine us, after each grave error, to cast ourselves, weeping, upon our Father's breast.

November 30, 1892.—I am aware that the slight effort I make to improve myself is hardly sufficient to enable me to penetrate below the surface of my soul. All the deepest roots of evil remain intact. I fail to reach them, and I doubt even if my feeble will, itself diseased at the roots, really strives honestly and with all its strength to eradicate every germ of future satisfaction, such as, for example, might come to me through adulation. It is easy enough to be silent concerning the praises I receive, but am I really desirous of actually suppressing these praises? Is it really my desire that henceforth no one shall bear me in mind and that my name be relegated to oblivion? My cunning self-esteem seeks to deceive me by reminding me of the good others may derive from my writings, but, on the other hand, does not my self-esteem actually court the adulation of others? How often does it not happen that those I know to possess far nobler characters than myself approach me in a spirit of humility!

December 2, 1892.—The soul is one—it is at once single and mysteriously multiple and complex. It feels the attraction of objects, of other souls; it is capable of feeling God's presence in things, in other souls and also directly. I do not know whether or no the soul possesses a spiritual sex. I would neither venture to deny this nor assert it. Certain it is that there exists an attraction between souls that is somewhat sexual in its nature; certain it also is that this attraction is in some way connected

with the sex of the body, but to what extent it is impossible to determine. Its very nature renders the attraction dangerous, because its impulse never fails to excite in us a physiological movement, a certain corporeal compliance. This attraction, however, works in the lower reaches of the soul, in those parts that are in closest contact with matter. We must fight it in ourselves and be on our guard against the acts and utterances it inspires, although this struggle may prove especially painful to those who do not condemn that form of spiritual love that is innocent of all the lusts of the flesh. But there is a higher reach of the soul, a part but scantily developed in many, which develops, indeed, only when it turns towards God, and which contains in itself the germ of a vaguely outlined future ascension. In this higher reach that is detached from all earthly affections and tends only towards the supernatural, a righteous and salutary acquiescence of two souls may indeed exist. Not that these two flames ever can or may forsake their upsoaring to incline towards each other, but they may unite at a certain point and *soar straight upwards from this point of conjunction*. If this be so, a state of inclination and separation has previously existed; therefore, no intimacy, no liberties, no action in common may be tolerated save such as are contained in the higher aspiration towards the Divine. Then, indeed, do such things become justified—then do I feel that they are righteous, that they are but preliminaries to the flowering of those germs of holiness that lie deep buried within us all.

Montegalda, October 20, 1893.—The birds are singing and the sun is shining into my little room. I have been praying by the open window, beneath the cloudless sky. I am deeply grieved that I cannot discover within myself a strong will to do good. It seems almost as were my very prayers arrested by the knowledge of this my weakness of purpose. I cease to pray and reflect upon the nature of these good resolutions I am offering to the Lord. Are not their very roots poisoned by the disheartening conviction that I shall never be able to maintain them? . . . I feel as if I were weeping inwardly, but the tears are not those of sadness, or rather should I say, they are not entirely bitter. From the contemplation of my own unhealthy state of weakness my thoughts soar upward towards Infinite Mercy, and once again I am filled with hope. . . . And now, kneeling beside you, as beside a spirit to whom God has entrusted the mission of succouring me, with tears in my eyes I pour out to you my remorse for all my shortcomings, in so much as I

have sinned above all against God and thus also against you. I vow to keep a closer guard upon my thoughts and senses, to exercise a more rigorous control over both my flesh and my spirit, a reasonable control, albeit, in order that I may not injure my health, for that, I know, I have no right to do. I furthermore promise you always to hold myself bound to glorify God with all the ardour of my being, with all the ardour I must snatch from my senses and bestow upon my spirit. I promise not to seek vain adulation, and that, when praise I deserve is bestowed upon me, to remind myself of the cowardly, brutish, lower part of my being. I promise also always to remain faithful to Christ.

Montegalda, October 21, 1893.—Yesterday I committed two or three trifling sins of vanity, by quoting several passages and writings that directly or indirectly flattered my self-esteem. If I do sometimes succeed in checking my vanity when in the very act of speaking, I immediately experience a secret sense of satisfaction that compensates me for my silence. One's vanity, indeed, is ever on the alert! How often does it not suggest plausible reasons for speaking! It may whisper, for instance: “You are not doing this for your own satisfaction, but to please those who admire you.” I know I should not listen to the voice of vanity; then let me strive to resist this temptation, especially as I fully realize that my spirit is chilled by these trifling and paltry yieldings to vanity. I feel the need of spiritual renewal not only for my own sake, but also for the sake of my son. I tremble at thought of the dangers to which he is and will be exposed. I fear so intensely for him the corruption he must encounter, and all the while I am not strong enough to keep my own heart pure! It would behoove me to make a free offering to God of all the sacrifices He has demanded of me and return fervent thanks for the burdens He has laid upon me, imploring Him, in return, to touch my child's heart and shield him from contact with evil, to inspire him with a strong affection for his parents, with a loathing for certain forms of vice, with a dread of physical suffering and of eternal punishment; to lend him strength to form habits of virtue, and also to fill him with a great love for Himself.

Montegalda, November 6, 1893.—I have been reading my Bible. Eagerly and over and over again I have read the Word of Life Eternal, that divine Word as clear as Light, vibrating with Love and Wisdom! We cannot but feel sure that, should Christ again tread the paths of earth and call to us, we should leave all and follow Him. We should do better, however, to

seek to realize that Christ is actually passing now and calling to us. How is it that we lack the strength to leave all for Him ? Oh, the weakness of the spirit !

November 9, 1893.—Physically I am stronger, but spiritually I have improved but slightly. Every passing cloud casts its shadow upon me. The one hope that has power to hearten me and light me on my way is that I may soon reach the goal, but that, before my last hour arrives, I may long since have conquered the enemy and thereafter had time to rejoice in the sweetness of Divine Clemency. Also that I may face death with undaunted faith in the Infinite Mercy that confers eternal life, and know beyond the shadow of a doubt that, in the life beyond, the "beloved spirit" will be happy, whatever our destiny may be, whether we be united or divided.

March 19, 1894.—O flower of the immortal agave, mayst thou conquer and blossom in my heart ! Purity and steadfastness in love, contempt for all cowardice, artistic creation for the sake of Truth, Beauty and Virtue, thirst for justice in all dealings with men, untiring labour, strict moderation as regards food and repose, contempt for worldly honours, a mystical union with God and with the soul of my soul—such is the flower of the agave, the *second immortal* flower that has not yet blossomed, that is still contending within me against the fierce and relentless demon which has tormented me since I was six years of age, and which once boasted in a dream that at last it would conquer and possess me !

These fragments from a private journal reveal to us the slow inner workings of Fogazzaro's soul in the effort to reach a higher spiritual plane. They are but the development and innumerable variations of the single motive that dominated this portion of his life. It is the period when, on the one hand, he was engaged in preparing his masterpiece, *Piccolo Mondo Antico* (The Patriot), and on the other, in the painful ascent of the ladder of renunciation. Perhaps no one of the readers of the novel, whose scene is laid in Valsolda, has ever caught a glimpse of this most tragic aspect of his spirit, veiled as it is by an art rich in epigram and humour. But it is a fact that in some mysterious way, in the depths of that conscience into which we have been allowed to gaze, the roots of this work are entwined with those of the occult and sacred drama that dominated this period in Fogazzaro's life.

Out of this fierce struggle, this painful striving against the impure in his nature, against morbid sentimentality, out of this honest thirst for a living Christianity, there emerged a form of pure and lofty art that teemed with freshness and human kindness. In these confessions of one soul to another, wherein a human being reveals and humbles himself as but few are able to do, we discover the very source of the inspiration destined to dominate all his future work. For no motives of fashion, of frivolity or advantage to be reaped did he allow his art to lead him to the handling of questions of religion, but solely because of his own deep experience of life, because, even in his most secret thoughts and fleeting emotions, he is filled with the spirit of the Gospel, by means of which he conquered the demons of pride and of the flesh. As these pages show, he dedicated his whole being to the spirit of a religion that should be vital and animate, and his art everywhere bears the stamp of this self-dedication and sacrifice.

But while the extracts from his journal reveal the fundamental, Christian inspiration destined henceforth to shape the work he was preparing to undertake, they likewise reveal the root of certain of his most prominent characteristics as an artist—most especially his power of incisive and original psychological analysis of character. If any one quality distinguishes Fogazzaro from the writers of his day it is assuredly his gift of grasping and fixing the peculiarities of the human temperament, and this is a quality that places him in the foremost rank among European men of letters. These pages, teeming with the spirit of asceticism, which help us to an understanding of his life's secret, also help us to understand and appreciate his art. They show us in what school he learnt to study the character and passions of men. Fogazzaro the artist was able to describe others truthfully because he knew himself so well. His striving for moral perfection, his struggle to free himself from the old Adam, enabled him the better to comprehend this tangle of baseness and grandeur, of what is spiritual and what is impure that is in each one of us. His desire to maintain himself free from impurity gave him a clear understanding of the subconscious workings of original impurity. Asceticism was his guide in considering the complexities and inconsistencies of the human soul, in grasping the

rapid passage of thought and sensation, the germs of action, the hidden cross-ways where the spirit makes its unconscious but irreparable choice between the paths of evil and of virtue. Christianity has led us all, some more and some less, to descend into those dark caverns of passion that resound alike with the echo of what is divine and with clamourings that are bestial. But he who is capable of soaring highest is also capable of descending lowest, as Dante himself has shown us; and Fogazzaro was able to descend into the depths of his own being with a peculiarly keen sense of what is human, precisely because he was a mystic capable of scaling those celestial heights whence we obtain a clear and unobstructed vision of what is hidden in the hearts of others.

The fundamental aspiration we have encountered on every page of the journal was also destined to find expression in verse. The best of Fogazzaro's religious poems of this period, indeed, are impregnated with it. The one that opens the new cycle is a short lyric entitled *Samarith di Gaulaa*, which was published in 1892. It was followed in 1894 by *Notte di Passione*, and in 1895 by *Visione*. These dates are landmarks indicating that peculiar state of mind whose impress Fogazzaro's poetical compositions were henceforth destined to bear. *Samarith*, however, is the least religious of these sacred songs. . . . *Notte di Passione* is far more fervent, more religious in character. Herein, indeed, has the poet enshrined his whole soul. The underlying theme, the inner struggle between nature and God, between the flesh and the spirit that dominates the pages of the journal, have taken definite shape in this lyric. As early as 1888 Fogazzaro had written a poem that, although never published, was inspired by the same sense of tragic dualism. He had conceived it at Nervi, after one of those nights when there seemed to course through his veins "a liquid fire, whose fierce heat neither the moon, the wind nor the sea" could mitigate.

This poem was said to have been the result of the violent emotion Fogazzaro had experienced on seeing in Enrico Nencione's study the portrait of a maiden lying dead amidst surrounding flowers, and smiling as one who, behind closed lids,

beholds a vision of Paradise. This was the young girl called Leila, to whom the poet dedicated two stanzas breathing the same mystic emotion that pervades the closing verses of *Notte di Passione*. . . . The impression he had received had helped Fogazzaro so much at a time when a tempest was raging within him, that he had written to the girl's mother, Princess Lequile-Montalto, asking her for a portrait of Leila in death and one of the living Leila. These he treasured in his study at San Bastiano, where he kept them enclosed in a black case. Beneath the likeness of the living girl he had written : *In caligine mortis*, while beneath that of the dead Leila he had inscribed the words : *In lumine vitae*. But in *Notte di Passione* Leila di Montalto was probably but a symbol. It was the face of another woman Fogazzaro saw in hers, of a woman already gone from him for ever, separated from him by sacrifice as by space, purified and transfigured by renunciation. Out of the fair visage of the young princess there smiled upon him the soul of her he had once called Elena, and who now lived in his memory, in his very soul, as "the spirit who aspires to become one with me in God." It is still the woman, but the woman who, like Beatrice, has passed onwards into the future life, whom he no longer calls by name, who is to him only "she who is dead"—*La Morta*. . . . Surely it is her voice he hears in *Visione* also, the short poem wherein he tells us of the moment of his second conversion to Christ. The underlying theme that inspires this mystic lyric is already contained in a passage of his private journal. "We cannot but feel sure that should Christ again tread the paths of earth and call to us, we should leave all and follow Him. We should do better, however, to seek to realize that Christ is actually passing now and calling to us." The poem entitled *Visione* ends with the words ". . . and the gentle voice of her who prayed at my side murmured timidly, *Volo, mundare*."

"*Volo, mundare!* The pious words are ever in my thoughts : and I hear two voices repeating them," he had written shortly before.¹ But in the poem one voice only seemed worthy to pronounce them—the voice of her who is become but the silent and invisible *Shadow* of his own life. But not even in this

¹ Letter to E—, July 8, 1893.

shadow of human love could he find the purification he sought. For its perfect consummation the Angel of Death must touch him with his wing. His soul must be laved in tears. We have now reached the most tragic moment in Fogazzaro's life, the sacred hour to which so long as he lived he would suffer no allusion. But now that he sleeps beside the fair-haired boy who was the last to bear his stainless name, we may venture to lift the veil behind which was concealed the most solemn event of the poet's life.

Fogazzaro's heart had known no sentiment so enduring, so earnest and profound as his affection for his son. Around Mariano all his thoughts and domestic affections had centred ; he was ready to sacrifice anything for this boy, the promotion of whose welfare was his father's main purpose in life. In him, in this only son, Fogazzaro had seen him who should perpetuate his line, to whose keeping he looked forward to confiding the traditions of his house, and the torch of life, still burning brightly, as he himself had received it from his father. He had therefore given himself freely and entirely to his son ; had not merely bestowed upon him the crumbs of his time and genius, as fathers who are famous and self-centred are apt to do. Renunciation, when it was for the boy's sake, was no hardship to him.

“ I am anxious about Mariano,” he wrote, when the child was about to cross the threshold of adolescence. “ I feel that, for a time at least, it is my duty to sacrifice many of my literary pursuits for his sake, and I am ready to do so. I intend to be present at his lessons, to tutor him myself and be with him as much as possible. All this will not prevent me from writing. . . . I shall always have some time to myself. The knowledge that I am really of use to him will afford me greater satisfaction than could the production of a great book.”¹

Father and son slept in adjoining rooms ; they studied side by side, and often Fogazzaro would lay aside the novel on which he was engaged to help the boy construe a difficult passage in some Greek or Latin author. In certain fragments of a poem written in memory of his dead son—fragments that are as the broken sobs of one who weeps as he writes—he recalls those days

¹ Letter to E——, February 29, 1888.

of work together, when Mariano would draw nearer to him and timidly whisper : " Will you help ? "

It was, therefore, a time of much sorrow for Fogazzaro when Mariano went to the university at Padua in 1893.

" Mariano went to Padua yesterday," he wrote on November 15. " His mother and I accompanied him, and before leaving I called him into my room and spoke such words to him as my heart and my sense of duty suggested. The boy was deeply moved, and, embracing me tenderly, made me the most solemn promises. I left him with a consoling faith in his good intentions and in the help God will surely grant him. May He bless and guide him always." ¹

This leave-taking, however, was but the prelude to another that was to be final, and the hour was not far distant when the boy would return to his father's house to die at the early age of twenty. Antonio Fogazzaro has enshrined the memory of this hour in a page that is wet with his tears—a page not to be considered as a work of art, but merely as the story of a father's grief. I will let him tell it as best he can, in a voice that is choked with sobs.

" On May 2, 1895, at about half-past ten o'clock, I was giving Maria a lesson in the schoolroom (at San Bastiano), when a carriage stopped at our door. I went to see whom it had brought. " A gentleman," I said ; but Maria, who had followed me to the window, exclaimed : ' It is Mariano ! ' I was not alarmed, but Rita immediately guessed the truth when she saw her son appear thus unexpectedly. I went downstairs and found Mariano in the little entrance-hall on the garden side. He kissed me and told me he was suffering from a slight attack of fever. At first he did not seem inclined to go to bed, but later in the day he took my advice and did so. To Rita he said : ' Mamma, I have got the same sort of fever from which Angelo (Valmarana) is suffering.' Before night his temperature rose, but although he was much flushed, he was nevertheless in good spirits. He saw his Uncle Gigio and Camillo (Franco). In the evening the doctor came. Rita would not believe the fever was of an infectious nature, and as yet Perozzi could not give a definite opinion. Mariano told no one but his mother what he suspected, but he immediately

¹ Letter to E——, Montegalda, November 15, 1893.

besought her to take every necessary precaution against the spread of infection. The true nature of his malady slowly revealed itself in the course of the next few days. He soon began to have violent pains in his head, which nothing seemed to relieve. Then gastric disturbances set in. There were times when the attacks of nausea were so violent that he could not lie still in bed. Whenever his sufferings became less severe, however, he was ready with some piece of fun, and he hardly ever failed to crack a joke with the doctor. It never occurred to him that his life was in danger. He always insisted upon examining the thermometer himself, but, unlike Angelo, he was never alarmed. At the end of the first week he took his own temperature at a moment of crisis. The fever was increasing. For two days it had been growing less, and if it continued to fall there was reason to hope the disease might be prevented from running its course. He examined the thermometer, and found it had gone up a line or two, not much indeed, but enough to discourage our hopes. 'Good-bye, fair dreams!' he exclaimed, realizing only that his sufferings would be prolonged for another week or even fortnight. His nights were practically sleepless and very trying, but he was always concerned about me—always afraid I should remain up too late or rise too early. I believe I never did the slightest thing for him that he did not thank me. Often he would ask me: 'What do you think, Father? Are you satisfied with me?' At times he was inclined to be impatient, and would demur about having his temperature taken, for instance. But he would quickly repent and say: 'Well, if you really wish it. . . . If it is any comfort to you. . . .' Whenever his mother was going to church he would beg her to pray for him, but never with the thought of death in his mind. Teresina sat up with him part of every night, and he would sometimes ask her to read to him from a book of devotion by Missirini, which his grandmother had given him at the time of his first Communion. On Thursday (May 9) nervous convulsions set in. Mariano suffered greatly from these at intervals. The doctor declared they were but one symptom of the disease and in no way alarming. He still persisted in regarding the case as a light one. The fever was never high. I think it was on Friday night that Mariano began to feel very ill indeed. '*Papa mio!* I feel so ill—so dreadfully ill!' he cried, looking at me with eyes overflowing with affection and distress. 'Stoop down,' he continued, 'and put your head quite close to me—I am going to die to-night! I shall die without a priest!' This was torture to me, but still I did not believe

his condition was critical. A few minutes later he whispered : ' I have got rid of the feeling that I am going to die.' The following night he again told me would be his last—his very last ; but presently he grew more calm. Learning from me that it was Sunday, he begged me to recite an *Ave Maria* with him. At other times I would kneel down and pray and he would make the responses. We would recite an Our Father, a Hail Mary or an Act of Contrition. He often spoke of his sufferings. ' Offer them to God for your sins,' I would tell him. ' Yes, for my sins are so many ! ' would be his reply. How many times he said to me : ' Dear Father, how I love you ! Darling, blessed Father, let me kiss your hand.' I often sought to kiss his wrist, but usually he would snatch it away, saying : ' No, no ! You might take the fever ! '

" Mariano was greatly interested in the arrival of the Valmarana family, talked constantly of the event, and was especially curious concerning Angelo's state of health. There was a period when he was able to control his nerves to a certain extent. One night he had an especially hard struggle with them. When these nervous attacks were upon him he would cry : ' Hold on to yourself, Mariano ! Keep your head ! ' But sometimes he would ask me whether I did not think it would relieve him to let go and shout and fling his arms about.

" Carrer came on Monday (May 13). . . . Monday was the last day on which Mariano was perfectly clear in his mind. On Tuesday morning he thought he was on board a vessel with the rest of us, in a great storm. He spoke to Teresina of an article that had been written against me, saying : ' How could any one write thus of him ? ' He thought he saw masses of flowers and a throng of children being borne along in the wake of the vessel.

" On Wednesday morning I wrote to Uncle Gigio asking that Uncle (Don) Giuseppe might come. He did so at once. I said to Mariano : ' Uncle Giuseppe is here. Would you like to see him ? Do you wish him to come to you ? ' ' I will go to him ! ' he cried. ' But you are not able, dear boy,' I protested. ' Yes, yes, I am, if I walk very slowly ! ' he assured me. However, he finally yielded, and his uncle came to him. He made his confession as if a vision of his whole life were passing before his eyes. His uncle was amazed at his lucidity and composure. When he had finished he sent for me. ' Father,' he said, ' I have been with Uncle Giuseppe and I am so happy ! ' A few hours later the Viaticum was brought to him. Meanwhile his mind had again begun to wander, and when we spoke to him of Communion he

did not clearly understand, but said he did not think he had committed any sin since his confession. Presently, however, he took the Communion with great devotion. Then he began repeating softly to himself the one word : 'Lord, Lord, Lord !' Dr. Carrer asked him if he were suffering. 'No,' he replied, 'I feel quite well. I am only asking the Lord to help me.' His glance fell upon me, and he said : 'Good-bye, Father, good-bye !' To Perozzi he said : 'Doctor, tell everybody I have always been a good boy ; that in spite of some things that may not have looked quite right, I have never done anything to disgrace either the Fogazzaros or the Valmaranas.' To Teresina he said : 'Tell them all that I died with God's name on my lips, as my grandparents did before me. Life is a dream . . . there comes a snap, and it is all over ! I am going to be happy where my grandparents are. . . .'"

On May 16 death entered the room overlooking the "Valley of Silence," then full of nightingales and overflowing with roses. By Mariano's bed sat Don Giuseppe, so numbed with grief as to be unable to recite the prayers for the dying, which pious duty fell to Don Sebastiano Rumor. Antonio Fogazzaro was not present. The members of his household had mercifully detained him in a room on the ground-floor where, with those nearest to him, he awaited the end. When Teresina, pale and trembling, appeared on the threshold, the woman who had nursed his son with a devotion that was maternal, he knew at once what her message was. He heard her falter: "He is dead !" But in the words that had become familiar to him through long conning of English literature, he replied: "Not dead, but gone before !" No, not dead indeed, but only gone before. Those who were present will never forget the light of faith that shone in his eyes and the tone in which he uttered the words of divine wisdom. Presently the stricken father fell upon his knees and began addressing Mariano aloud, as though he were alone with him, soul to soul, far from every one and only to be heard by his son. The storm that had swept over his house, uprooting his earthly hopes, had suddenly lifted him as on mighty wings, bearing him upwards, wafting him heavenwards. The hand of death that had robbed him of the life of his life had dragged him also in the wake of the invisible into the very aura of God.

Those who came into contact with Fogazzaro at this time admired his strength of character, the courage he had displayed in taking up his life again and resuming his work, the gentle and indulgent composure that characterized him in all his domestic relations, in that house where a tragic and sudden silence had encompassed him. But no one knew that his smiling strength came to him through his communings with the dead. "My thoughts are always with *him* . . .," he wrote, "even when others see me composed and cheerful; my thoughts are always with him, and through him, are far more often than formerly with my father and mother."¹ In this ineffable union he knew that he was being born again to fresh hope. His spirit was being rejuvenated by something that came to him out of the hidden ways of death. His grief had not broken him; it had uplifted and purified. It had been for him the cleansing wave for which he had prayed.

¹ Letter to E——, Velo, September 10, 1895.

CHAPTER XII

THE PATRIOT

MEANWHILE, encompassed by grief, Fogazzaro had written the word "Finis" at the end of a work which, with *I Promessi Sposi*, remains one of the few Italian novels of the nineteenth century that may be called popular in the best sense of the word.

The work had been long maturing in its author's mind, and as early as the year 1885 we find traces in his correspondence of this Valsolda romance which was just beginning to shape itself in his imagination. It still loomed vaguely as a simple and homely tale, poor in dramatic incident, but containing "many characters calling for skilful handling"; a story having for a background that region which had been the home of Fogazzaro's childhood and the scene of those patriotic events to which his forebears had thrilled in the heroic days of the *Risorgimento*.

It was not until after several years of careful preparation in the author's mind that the ground-plan of the novel assumed definite shape. Not until 1889, indeed, did the main theme come to him that was destined to illumine those dim regions wherein the characters of the still shapeless novel floated vaguely.

"I propose to disclose the mental attitude of each one of my characters and point out the consequences to which it leads," he wrote. "Some among them seek but to enjoy this present life to the full, and look upon the future life with *indifference*; others live but to do good in this world *without thought of a future life*; there are some who look for happiness *in the future life*, but seek to earn it by faith and prayer rather than by good works; others again look for happiness in the *future life and regard the present with scorn*, and finally there are those who look for happiness *in the future to be earned through the present life*—and to me this seems the right attitude. I shall show the different

effects of suffering on people whose mental attitudes differ. Such is my plan, but it is still very vague." ¹

But the main purpose of the novel was indeed already established, and soon the light it shed brought the characters of the principal actors into clear relief and the natures of Franco and Luisa stood revealed in all their striking contrast.

Fogazzaro had now attained the open highway that led to the full development of his plot. The shadowy characters were beginning to assume bodily shape. The figures that had been but vaguely defined at the outset were beginning to take their allotted places in the story, each with his own name and personality. Luisa appears, she whose voice "was not soft, but nevertheless harmonious, and whose words were often full of mirth and mischief"; / Franco comes upon the scene, in whom Fogazzaro saw his own father in his youth; Uncle Piero takes his place, endowed with the characteristics of Pietro Barrera; here is Signora Teresa Rigey, whose face and spirit are those of the author's mother; and with these come all Valsolda, where he had actually known Signora Barborin, Puttini, Pasotti and Gilardoni—all the little world that had passed in and out of the small house on the shore of the lake.

One thing cannot fail to strike us forcibly in examining the secret formation of this novel, namely, that in creating his work of art Fogazzaro was guided solely by his desire to *do good*. / Like *I Promessi Sposi*, *Piccolo Mondo Antico* (The Patriot) was the fruit of an endeavour more earnest than that of purely ethical creation, and this fact constitutes one of the hidden links that connect the two books. In undertaking this work Fogazzaro, like Manzoni, had fully realized the responsibility he was assuming both as a man and a Christian; he had concentrated on the endeavour to make art the handmaiden of truth; if necessary he was prepared to sacrifice imagination to truth, and what is beautiful to what is good. / This, indeed, is the same spirit that induced Manzoni to exclude all ardent love passages, the same need of bringing the writer's art into perfect harmony with truth and goodness. Fogazzaro, who in early life had rejected

¹ Letter to E——, Vicenza, September 10, 1889.

Manzoni's well-known opinion concerning love in art, had perhaps been unconsciously converted to it, or rather, should I say, had come by other paths to share the master's views. He was now thoroughly imbued with the artistic sense, was enamoured of art ; but at the same time it was his ardent desire, his supreme need, that his writings should be of *moral worth*. "When I am assailed by the fear that they are not," he writes, "I am utterly miserable, and praise, honours or fame coming to me at such a moment only render my pain and secret sense of humiliation more intense."

He would not have *The Patriot* judged solely "in the light of what is beautiful," but more especially in that of its "moral worth."

On the eve of his greatest triumph the question he asked himself was no longer, as it had once been, whether his book would prove a failure or a success. He was determined not to listen to the voices of the world. The ear of his spirit was strained to catch the utterances of a deeper voice ; his appeal was to a sterner judge—to his consciousness of having laboured alike for the good of his own soul and that of others. This was his one anxiety with regard to a verdict he looked to his friends to pronounce.

"I am venturing to send you my book," he writes to Monsignor Bonomelli. "I do not demand that you read it; your time is too precious, and this book, written for the general public in the hope of stimulating sentiments of virtue and consequently with the intention of amusing, and at the same time of carrying honesty even to the point of exposing some of the coarser sides of life, is not worthy of your personal attention. But among those of your 'entourage' you may find some one whose judgment you trust and who will be willing to read the book and tell you whether I have therein achieved the moral and religious purpose which was my one reason for writing it. My conscience was not entirely at ease with regard to at least two of my earlier works, and I have now sought to write a book upon which it may rest in peace, to which my thoughts may turn with satisfaction when my last hour shall have struck, when I shall have been brought to a full realization of the vanity of fame."¹

¹ Letter to Monsignor Bonomelli, Vicenza, November 19, 1895.

This haunting moral trepidation may appear incomprehensible to those who place æsthetics upon a different plane from that of life. But to us, the impenitent Platonists, to whom beauty is but the irradiation of truth, it seems of no slight significance that strict Christian discipline should lead the artist back to the central fires of his own conscience. The highest art begins where æsthetic endeavour is overcome by a higher sentiment, when the artist forgets in a certain sense that he is an artist, and once more finds the purest vein of his own humanity in an inner exaltation of spirit. Beauty bubbles forth, as from some spiritual substratum, there where most men of letters fail to look for it. In this sense the severe commandments of ascetic renunciation may well be considered as the fountainhead of that state of spiritual concentration of which masterpieces are born.

These commandments were undoubtedly such to the author of *The Patriot*, and in them resides the secret of the artistic superiority of this novel over all of Fogazzaro's other works. In this book his art draws its sustenance through roots that pierce far deeper than those of fancy. The ruthless sacrifice of his passions and vanity has brought him to discover the pure source of sincerity and inspiration. The new and characteristic accents in which he now speaks have been acquired through renunciation of all those impure and conventional sentiments that attract the masses, and through a more intimate communing with the ideals handed down to him from his fathers—communings with the people and the land of his childhood. He set out deliberately to exalt humble things, the things the world is inclined to overlook—a village hidden away on the outskirts of Lombardy ; noble spirits that the encompassing folds of the *Risorgimento* had concealed from notice ; heroic but hidden virtues ; love in marriage ; the sorrows of a single family ; the secret drama enacted within the walls of a narrow, middle-class home. And, the world's prejudices notwithstanding, these humble things in their turn exalted him. . . . !

The Patriot gave Fogazzaro a definite, a leading position, indeed, in the Italian literature of the late nineteenth century ; nor can we admit that his right to hold this position can ever be

justly contested, if, assuming the dispassionate and unprejudiced attitude of the independent critic, we subject the work of our men of letters since 1870 to careful examination. It is difficult to-day to imagine what our children will think of the men and art of the era that was ours; which books among those we counted great will survive, and which be forgotten.

I believe, nevertheless, that we may safely assume that *The Patriot* possesses sufficient merit to insure Fogazzaro's position as the perpetuator of a national Christian tradition in the art of our own times. Whereas Carducci, D'Annunzio and Pascoli are destined to represent a period of great brilliance in the history of the Third Italy, as the restorers of the form and spirit of poetry according to the traditions of Latin naturalism and of the humanistic Renaissance, Fogazzaro stands alone upon the opposite shore, confronting them as the interpreter and spokesman of "humble and pious Italy."

The other three are undoubtedly greater artists than he. Their works are destined to form part of the world's literary heritage, and one must indeed be devoid of all just appreciation of æsthetic value to believe that the bitter criticism to which they have been subjected will have the power to eliminate the true significance of their labours in the making of the New Italy. But even such art as theirs has its limitations and deficiencies, and they cannot be considered as the interpreters of the whole soul of the Italy of our day. They are the exponents of certain forms of energy that lay fermenting in the depths of the Latin race, of certain aspirations towards a cyclic revulsion to pagan origins. But they are lacking in one attribute that is essentially of spiritual art—the power of concentrating on "the analysis of that struggle in the breast of man between the two Adams," as Carducci himself has aptly defined it, the key to which "Dante brought out of Paradise and carried with him to the grave."¹

Whereas the three greatest poets of New Italy represent but the reversion of her literature towards the humanistic, Fogazzaro will stand as the only exponent of a wide current of Christian spiritualism/which at one time was strong in the land, and con-

¹ See article entitled "Dell' anticristianesimo," by G. Carducci, in *Rinnovamento*. First Year, Third Issue.

tributed largely towards the formation of the nation's liberal consciousness, and which, since Manzoni, has had no greater representative in the realm of art than the author of *The Patriot*. His work will testify to the fact that during the second half of the nineteenth century the soul of Italy was not wholly pagan ; he will remain the interpreter of the inner life of his contemporaries, the poet of souls he alone of all the writers of his day really loved and understood. An earnest searcher of the soul of man, he will occupy a lonely post, confronting the three great poets who exalted life and Italy above all else. No one will be able to contest his supremacy as a psychologist, a creator of types, a prober of the conscience of man. He will remain the only one of the four who was able to see things not only in the light of the sun, but in that also of the Spirit that illumines what is most humble, most obscure. In him posterity will not see Christianity as a motive for æsthetic emotion or archæological curiosity, but as the true centre from which light is shed upon each one of his characters, upon every page of his work.

Fogazzaro's name, therefore, may well be placed beside that of Alessandro Manzoni, and this without fear of any glaring incongruity. I am indeed convinced that the critic of to-morrow will more readily recognize the element of occult kinship that connects these two writers of the north. Both, albeit in ways that differ widely, represent in the history of Italian fiction, that talent for introspection which is so rare in our country, and we can hardly dismiss the fact as a mere coincidence that, while other regions were enriching literature with the revival in all its splendour of the pagan lyric, in this most remote frontier region, encompassed by the snow-crowned Alps, with its marvellous sheets of water reflecting a paler sky, and in close proximity to the lake of *I Promessi Sposi*, Antonio Fogazzaro should have presented his generation with another great Christian romance.

CHAPTER XIII

THE CATHOLIC AND THE LIBERAL

THE success of *The Patriot* was universally recognized, even by critics whose opinion concerning it differed widely. This was a sign that the work of art had touched certain chords of sentiment in those depths wherein man is but man, and neither "red nor black." This general approval had its echo in the high spheres of government, and by a decree, dated October 25, 1896, His Majesty King Umberto made the author of *Piccolo Mondo Antico* a Senator of the Realm. Fogazzaro was gratified by this distinction, regarding it as a sign of the times and as an honourable recognition, not of his personal merit, but of the point of view he represented in Italy. To Monsignor Bonomelli, who had written from Grenada to congratulate him, he replied as follows :

" This great honour has come to me all unexpected and unsought. My vanity is indeed flattered, but in my inner consciousness I know that I was not born for politics or assemblies. I have something amusing to tell you, but pray keep it to yourself. There was much discussion concerning my nomination when the Ministers met in Council, because some among them declared I belonged to the clerical party. It was Luzzatti who took up the cudgels in my defence, pointing out the difference between a Catholic and a Clerical.¹ It is true I was his candidate, and Luzzatti has never forgotten that we were friends at the university."

Fogazzaro meanwhile was preparing to give those ministers who had failed to distinguish between a Catholic and a Clerical a practical demonstration, by means of the attitude he publicly assumed in commemorating two of the grandest figures of the Italian *Risorgimento*—Rosmini and Cavour.

¹ Luzzatti is an Israelite. (Translator's Note.)

The hundredth anniversary of the birth, on the 2nd of March 1797, of the philosopher of Rovereto, was approaching, and Rosmini's disciples were determined to pay due honour to their master, who since the condemnation that had been pronounced against him in 1888 (this being one of the acts whereby Leo XIII. definitely severed all connection with that current in favour of a conciliatory policy which was championed by the followers of Rosmini) had been regarded by the intransigent faction as little better than a heretic. The centenary celebration in Rosmini's honour was therefore intended as a vindication of the character of this great and holy man, who had been much lowered in the esteem of timid Catholics by the fact that forty propositions contained in his writings had been condemned, and who was become the target for the shafts of a certain class of theological seetarians, who in all times have felt the need of venting their hatred upon some one they choose to consider as the *incarnation* of error. The celebration would also serve to rally the forces of the Liberal Catholics who, since 1887, had suffered all the disadvantages accruing from the unfavourable position in which the Vatican's new policy had placed them. As a monument to this revival in favour of the great Catholic philosopher two ponderous volumes were published and distributed on the occasion of a solemn assembly of the members of the Imperial and Royal Academy of the *Agiati* at Rovereto. These volumes were entitled *Per Rosmini nel primo centenario della sua nascita*, and contained an essay dedicated by Fogazzaro to the great divine, the great Italian. This was entitled "La figura di Antonio Rosmini," and was completed later on by a second essay—"Per Antonio Rosmini." These two compositions definitely established their author's attitude as a Catholic and a Liberal in opposition to the intransigency of the papal policy.

Fogazzaro's admiration for Rosmini was of long standing. His earliest studies in philosophy had taught him to reverence the master. He had loved him almost before he had mastered his doctrines. He had heard him spoken of as a shining light raised up by the Lord for Italy and the Church. It was rather by his reflection in the clear intellect and ardent affection of Don

Giuseppe than by any close study of his works that Fogazzaro had come to know him best. Therefore, when the group of militant Rosminians, foremost among whom was Professor Giuseppe Morando, invited him to compose an essay on the great teacher, he was, I would almost say, in the state of grace necessary to enable him to paint a true portrait. In fact the pages he devotes to Rosmini in the commemorative volume are remarkable for the beauty of the author's method of interpretation. I do not hesitate to class them among the finest of Fogazzaro's writings as regards strength, subtlety, concentration and the manner in which a leading principle is developed. Having once discovered in his "recognition of the Being according to His orderings," the fire that lit up and warmed Rosmini's life and works, Fogazzaro was able to examine the thinker's complex nature by the light of this fundamental principle, subjecting it to a psychological analysis of such delicacy and lucidity as to render his essay on Rosmini, a true work of art. It is a rare example of philosophical synthesis, learned but not heavy in style, breathing poetic inspiration and unblemished by false rhetoric. Its perusal conveys the impression that Fogazzaro has indeed found in Rosmini *his own* philosopher; the philosopher best adapted to respond to the complex demands of his intellect and teach him the "most perfect relations possible between man and the Truth."

We cannot say with any precision how far Fogazzaro carried his studies of the Rosminian system, but the two essays of which he was the author suffice to reveal to us how thoroughly he comprehended the fundamental principles and the spirit of Rosminian philosophy. Nor can we hesitate therefore, in the light of what is philosophical in his literary productions, to describe him as a "Rosminian." It was, in fact, in Rosmini that he found justification for his repugnance to a calm and passive acceptance of dogma, and for his refusal to regard as ambitious the effort of bringing the teachings of reason to bear upon it. Through Rosmini he came to understand that reason must accompany faith rather than submit blindly to it, and that faith may indeed add to reason but can take nothing away from the one divine element that is ours by nature. To the last he retained the Rosminian trust in reason, from which, indeed, he

never departed ; and when he attempted to depart from it his thought lost much of its lucidity. Between Fogazzaro and philosophical modernism there was always the strong barrier of his Rosminian structure. Against immanentism he took refuge in that philosophy which declares the transcendentality of God, but which at the same time maintains the fact of the *divine* as immanent in Nature, which is the way, and the light that guides, "the dawn but not the sun . . . the shining of God's countenance, but not yet the divine countenance itself."

On the other hand, it was in Rosmini that Fogazzaro found corroboration of his poetic intuition of animation in all nature, an intuition that had led him from the dreams of his youth to the study of evolution. To Rosmini, indeed, all nature is alive, or rather all nature contains a sentient principle which is conscious of matter and which, becoming individualized in divers ways and according to different organisms, results in the different souls of which the world's life is composed. Furthermore, according to Rosmini, the phenomena of motion lead to the recognition of a hidden, spiritual agency whereby the body is *poised* and moved (he dwells at length upon the impossibility of discovering perpetual motion), which organizes it and which he calls the *corporeal principle*. Fogazzaro therefore might well regard Rosmini as his true master ; and it would not be difficult to discover the germs of *Ascensioni Umani* in *Psicologia* and in *Teosofia*, or even in certain chapters of that brilliant *Introduzione al Vangelo di S. Giovanni* (Introduction to the Gospel according to St. John), with whose mysticism Rosmini was far more deeply imbued than his writings might lead one to suppose.

Fogazzaro's affinity with Rosmini the reformer, with the author of *Delle Cinque Piaghe della Santa Chiesa* (The Five Sores of Holy Church) is even more apparent than his affinity with Rosmini the philosopher and mystic. Some have sought to trace the source of what has been termed Fogazzaro's "modernism" to foreign authors and influences, or to more secret currents of opposition to Roman ecclesiasticism. Thus the *Civiltà Cattolica*, assuming the existence of dark conspiracies, held that the source of *The Saint* was to be found in Towianski, with whom Fogazzaro had become acquainted through Archbishop Passavalli and

Senator Tancredi Canonico. Now Towianski's influence was but slight, and was experienced only during the closing years of Fogazzaro's life. Not only does no letter from him exist that reveals any active connection with the work of the *servi di Dio* (Servants of God), but in a letter to Favero he formally declares that he can hardly recall Passavalli. "I have but a vague recollection," he says, "of having seen Puecher Passavalli when I was very young, but I remember distinctly that my people regarded him with the greatest love and reverence."¹ The letter contains no allusion to any community of thought. The same may be said of Fogazzaro's intercourse with Canonaco, with whom he conversed on rare occasions during the period immediately preceding his death; but, as he himself told me, these conversations were always dominated by a sense of reserve due to the difference in the characters of the two men. As for Towianski, Fogazzaro did not seek to hide his admiration for this "lay prophet," but he made his acquaintance only at a later date through Avvocato Begey, who published his works, and he certainly loved him far less than his great companion in religious propaganda, Adam Mickiewicz, of whom he wrote: "Je l'ai aimé à trente ans autant que j'ai aimé Byron à vingt, et je vous assure que c'est beaucoup dire. . . ."² Why then should the sources of those tendencies that found expression in *The Saint* be sought where they do not exist, when he himself in his essays on Rosmini clearly shows us who his master was and reveals the true source of his inspiration? The impartial historian must therefore seek the origin of Fogazzaro's idea of reform in the works of one in whom he saw the "champion of Italian unity, of liberal institutions and of church reform; the formidable adversary of certain theologians and moralists, and above all the patron saint, so to speak, of a species of constitutional, Catholic opposition, which is bold enough to disapprove of the action of that party which predominates in the Church."³ It is precisely in the *Cinque Piaghe* that those fundamental convictions will be found which inspired Fogazzaro's line of thought

¹ Letter from A. Fogazzaro to A. Favero, *La Montanina*, July 17, 1910.

² *Ibid.*, M. Zdziechowski, Vicenza, February 2, 1899.

³ *Speeches*: "Per Antonio Rosmini," p. 286.

with regard to a renewal that should spring from the depths of the Catholic conscience itself.

In the foremost rank he places faith in liberty, which he felt to be the most substantial basis for the future greatness of Catholicism. Fogazzaro, in fact, was never an advocate of a conciliatory policy. Rosmini had shown him that "the Church does not need protection, but liberty. Liberty is the very air that keeps the Church alive." As for the new situation created by the achievement of Italian unity, he quotes Rosmini to persuade Catholics that they should not harass their minds with the question of providing temporal guarantees for the Pope, but rather seek to profit by the new state of emancipation and to realize how, by this means, the hand of Providence has exalted the Holy See in a manner totally unforeseen, "a manner terrifying indeed to many Catholics, but divine in the choice and handling of the instruments employed."

If we read the *Cinque Piaghe* carefully we shall find in them the substance of those aspirations towards a Church poorer in worldly goods, but richer in the virtues of religion, purified by persecution and exalted in dignity and prestige by the holiness and thought that form the groundwork of the whole of Fogazzaro's religious activity. We shall be able to trace the conviction he held, that the Church must adapt herself to the spirit of the times, or rather that she must not fear that spirit but seek to assimilate it, lending a willing ear to the divine appeal that is made through the enemy forces themselves, and also through the political parties which assail her. "Perhaps," Rosmini writes, "this very state of unrest among nations which in its manifestations assumes forms that are *entirely materialistic* . . . may have a hidden source of which the nations themselves are still unconscious; and a pious need may perhaps lurk *where it would seem that impiety is most triumphant*—the need of a religion free to make its appeal to the heart of the people."¹ It is precisely because of his mental optimism that Fogazzaro is condemned when, all untroubled, he envisages the future of the Church; knowing well that more good than evil may come to her from her enemies, and maintaining that in the modern world she must

¹ Antonio Rosmini, *Delle Cinque Piaghe*, p. 79, Lugano, 1863.

hourly show herself worthy of the people's trust, cast aside the useless instruments of domination of bygone days, and speak the language of to-day ; that she must live to shed her light upon social conditions that are the outcome of revolution, as she once shed it upon those which were the outcome of barbarian invasions, and reveal the voice of the Almighty that is concealed in every upheaval of the great mass of humanity. This attitude of mind, transcending the question of the temporal power (which is a problem that is solved) and opening up a more ample and mystical vision of the relation between the Church and humanity, came to Fogazzaro as a legacy from Rosmini.

Besides this faith, he also found in the master the critical accents of the reformer. What Rosmini condemns in the ecclesiastical institution is also what Benedetto¹ deplores in his interview with the Holy Father, namely, the paucity of the Gospel spirit and of the "sentiment of the Word" in the clergy ; the total exclusion of the laity from participation in the life of the Church ; the formalistic, dictatorial tendency of Catholicism since the sixteenth century. Herein, indeed, Rosmini is the true precursor of modernism. There are passages in the second chapter penned in 1832 that might have been written eighty years later. They mark the starting-point of ecclesiasticism—of the counter-reformation. He recognizes the immediate benefit to morals and church discipline that resulted from the Council of Trent, but he does not hide the fact that it also marked the beginning of that *stay* in religious life in which we still live, and which must be overcome. He has the daring to use the following language, in speaking of the reforms introduced by the Council of Trent : "Seminaries were invented that the clergy might be maintained in ignorance, as the catechisms were invented to insure the ignorance of the masses. They had not the courage (nor was it to be expected that they would) to revert to the ancient usage that made the bishop personally responsible for the organization of his flock and clergy ; the practice of leaving this to the lower clergy was maintained. Nevertheless, the bishops were stimulated to fresh vigilance, by which discipline profited immensely ; certain customs were reformed and the

¹ The hero of *The Saint*, by Fogazzaro. (Translator's Note.)

light of zealous endeavour shone forth from the limited and for the greater part material sphere of action within whose bounds the lower clergy have been confined for centuries. But the art of endowing the Church with great men was lost—the art of endowing her with priests conscious of the vastness of their mission, capable of maintaining the Church in her sublime universality and grandeur, men who appeared inwardly possessed and dominated by that sentiment of the Word by which the characters of the clergy of early days were moulded—by that sentiment which, making the whole soul its own, withdraws it from this world that shall pass away, gives it its being in the life eternal, and, from the fires that burn in the mansions of eternity, teaches it to snatch a brand that may set the whole world afame.”¹

Lofty expressions, these, words laden with that virile, sacerdotal spirit with which Fogazzaro was imbued. For, whereas in his great work he has encompassed with beauty the figure of Don Giuseppe Flores—the disciple of Rosmini—and has set over against him types of priests who are puny both in heart and intellect, this was but to enable him to give artistic expression to that same contrast between what the churchman should be and what he is, that is set forth in the *Cinque Piaghe*—“the contrast between the true minister of God who feeds upon ‘sacred truth’ and is endowed with that wisdom ‘whose very essence is holiness,’ and the average priest, the apathetic administrator of sacraments, the proclaimers of a truth whose sweetness he has not ‘tasted inwardly,’ but which he has learnt mechanically from the ‘trivial writings’ and the ‘trivial teachers’ of this epoch of theologians.”² If, in a certain sense, Fogazzaro may be termed an “anti-clerical,” his anti-clericalism is the direct outcome of the ardent Catholicism of Rosmini, a Catholic hot with the fire of truth experienced. His is a Christian anti-clericalism born of faith and hope in the destiny of the Church now and in eternity, wherein it differs from that bitter, critical spirit of such as no longer believe. His is an anti-clericalism imbued with that mystic sense of waiting for the speedy awakening of Our Lord, “Who sleeps in the imperilled bark” as once upon the Sea of

¹ Antonio Rosmini, *Delle Cinque Piaghe*, p. 33.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 42-43.

Galilee. His is an anti-clericalism that teems with that sense of sacred awe by which listening souls are warned of the approach of the hour "wherein they must again weigh anchor and set forth upon a voyage of daring and adventure"; "an anti-clericalism quick with the intense emotion he experiences who feels that something supremely grand is about to transpire, who feels the gust of divine, freedom-bringing wind," a state of mind which Rosmini has described in the following significant passage: "Who shall say that the time be not now when the great ship shall again cast off from the shore, spread her canvas to the breeze and sail away to the discovery of some new and perhaps vaster continent?"

It was but right then that Antonio Fogazzaro should take his place in the name of Rosmini, in the religious struggle that was beginning. He was Rosmini's last and most ardent disciple. In Rosminianism he had discovered a foundation for that opposition against all that "tend to make of the Catholic Church a sort of vast militarist and protectionist empire." This opposition, meeting and mingling with other currents of thought and action, was destined soon to be called by another name. What we can see clearly to-day, however, and what we wish to establish definitely, is the starting-point of all of Fogazzaro's successive religious attitudes. In the heat of debate he may be confounded with the modernists; but a more careful and dispassionate examination of his philosophical and spiritual kinships will reveal him as, to the last, a Liberal Catholic. The true source from which he drank is the movement that took place between the years 1830 and 1848, and was as the great religious prelude to national independence. Fogazzaro was destined to be the last representative of this movement and one already troubled by the new problems that presented themselves at the close of the century.

In order the more accurately to define his political attitude Fogazzaro accepted an invitation to deliver an address at Vicenza on June 6, 1897, on the occasion of the inauguration of a bust of Count Cavour. It was his intention to confirm his Liberalism—the Liberalism of *Daniele Cortis*. The pages of this address ring

with his great faith in liberty and in the man "whom God had appointed to be the principal instrument of His shining act of justice on Italy's behalf," and in them he clearly illustrates his standpoint with regard to the Roman question. Indeed, while expressing the hope that the "living and eternal Rome who reigns in our hearts," might not set herself against New Italy, and that "the barriers between Rome and Rome" might fall, Fogazzaro declared that no human power could replace the disordered corpse of temporal power upon its throne, and pointed out the solution of the problem as contained in Cavour's formula, in the words that burst from the prophetic lips of the great champion of Liberty in the last, vision-illumined moments of his agony: "Frate! Frate! Friar! Friar! A free Church in a free State!"

"Let us pay reverent heed to these words," Fogazzaro concluded. "Let us repeat them to the masses, for they are the truth and the way; the passing century leans towards them—let us hope to see their fruit in the century to come; let us use them to pacify our countrymen; upon them let us raise in Rome, our august Mother, a monument of laws, ensuring perfect religious and civil freedom; let us wear proudly upon our brow the glorious name of Count Camillo di Cavour."

This address was well calculated to awaken a broad echo of admiration, of approval and discussion. As a piece of literature it was admirable. A man of letters, who is a most able judge of style and language, wrote to Fogazzaro concerning it: "You have contributed one of the most splendid pages to our national eloquence. Permit me, as an Italian and a writer of Italian, to thank you most heartily."¹

The admiration of the liberals, however, was immediately countered by the hostility of the clericals. This group was already ill-disposed towards Fogazzaro on account of his inopportune pronouncement in connection with Grosso's famous painting known as *L'ultimo convegno* (The Last Revel). The Patriarch of Venice, Giuseppe Sarto, the future Pius x., had been indignant about it. And now that "temporalism," which had been the leading factor in the policy of Leo xiii., was openly attacked

¹ Letter from Isidore Del Lungo to A. Fogazzaro, Florence, June 26, 1897.

by the greatest Catholic writer in Italy. This could not fail to stir the world of the Vatican to its depths, especially as the immediate effect of the address had been to produce a crisis that occasioned the downfall of Vicenza's clerical administration.

Even moderate Catholics, themselves partisans of a conciliatory policy, were not entirely satisfied with Fogazzaro's blunt declarations in the name of Cavour. Monsignor Bonomelli himself could not entirely approve of "those allusions to Rome that are so strong and so explicit; to the barriers and the complete conquest of Rome" (Letter of June 17, 1897). Fogazzaro met these objections in a letter which forms the ablest rider to the declaration of Liberalism contained in his address. The letter runs :

"DEAR AND REVERED FRIEND,—I thank you for having given me your opinion with all the kindness of a father. I will reply by a clear statement of my views. In my youth I loved Cavour with an ardour and enthusiasm which the passing years have failed to cool. I still love and honour him more profoundly than I could ever express in public; more than Garibaldi, from whose political and religious delusions he was exempt; more than Victor Emmanuel, whose boastfulness, passion for popularity and all too well-known weaknesses he did not possess. It grieves and angers me to see that Italy is forgetting him, while the other two, who could have done nothing without him, are always being extolled. The intensity of my feelings on this point will explain the strength of my language. I beg you to turn to Cavour's speeches on the Roman question, Monsignore, and to note his splendid utterances in honour of the Catholic religion and of that Pontiff to whom he looked for the word that should bring peace, to whom, on the downfall of the temporal power, he promised that greatness we already see in part, but not yet in its entirety, because, alas! the Holy See forcibly despoiled by us, and refusing to despoil itself for charity's sake (*per amore*), as Cavour believed it would, is not encompassed by that universal and affectionate regard which the great statesman predicted. Read Cavour's words again! It was he who said: 'The Roman question is not one that can be settled by force.' Ah, had he but lived another ten years! Believe me, my revered friend, not even my enemies can have misunderstood my meaning in speaking of the barriers that exist between Rome and Rome.

All must know that I mean *moral* barriers, that I invoke peace with liberty. Berico and his associates, on the other hand, attacked me on account of my allusion to the Bourbon government. Well, I was speaking of Cavour; I was addressing the masses and defending the great Italian at the very point where he has been attacked with the greatest violence. Had I the right to weaken my defence because among my hearers there was a relative of the Bourbons? He was present as mayor of Vicenza. It is well known to many that on the preceding day, when he came to consult me concerning certain arrangements for the ceremony, I said to him: 'Is that all you wish to ask me about?' in a tone that meant: 'Do you not wish to question me concerning my speech?' He replied that there was nothing more. I may add that when engaged in writing my address I had allowed myself to be carried away to the extent of alluding to the prisons and scaffold. This passage, however, I eventually cancelled, retaining only Gladstone's famous phrase which sums up the *government*—not the prince alone, but the entire mechanism wherewith Naples was tortured and corrupted. But I must not overdo my self-defence. I might, indeed, have explained that the barriers I meant were moral barriers, and instead of saying the *Bourbons* of Naples, I might have said the *King* of Naples. But now permit me to kiss your hand with filial affection.—Your

"ANTONIO FOGAZZARO.

"P.S.—I believe my address did not appear in a single newspaper. This was because of a certain 'irredentistic' passage, the journalists fearing to lose the Austrian sale!"¹

Thus clearly did Fogazzaro reassert his faith in the policy of Cavour as he had expressed it in *Daniele Cortis*. He had already fixed the limit of his dealings with the clerical party in a long letter to Filippo Meda, the future Minister, then in his youth, which letter, among much else, contained the following candid expression of its writer's sentiments:

"As regards my opinion of the clerical party and its ideals, here it is. You talk much of the *virgin columns of the reserve*. If these *virgin columns* which have not yet taken the field are composed of young men of your stamp, I shall certainly feel strongly attracted to them, the profound difference in our views notwithstanding. But my feelings are far other when I consider

¹ Letter to Monsignor Bonomelli, Vicenza, June 19, 1897.

the members of the clerical party who are prominent in public assemblies and in the Press—especially in the Press ! . . . The clerical party is active in many ways that are praiseworthy—it founds social institutions that may indeed degenerate, but are nevertheless based upon sound principles ; it is assiduous in its supervision of such public administrations as come within its jurisdiction. But unfortunately it is backed by a Press which, judging from what I see of it, may be clerical, but is by no means Christian ; which is sarcastic and abusive by turn and never forgives either the living or the dead. . . .

“ As regards the main question, that of Rome, my convictions may appear to be tinged with politics, but I assure you they are entirely religious. I do not feel that Italy has any reason to be proud of the twentieth of September episode, which was in no way glorious, but, on the other hand, I am convinced, profoundly convinced, that the events of that date were most salutary for the Church, that they mark the beginning of her purification and regeneration and of the ascension of the Roman Pontificate towards sublime heights. I do not presume to judge the men who took part in those events, but in the collapse of temporal power I see the shining light of the beneficent intervention of Providence.”¹

While this letter reveals the sympathy with which, in the perfect honesty of his opinions, Fogazzaro could regard even those whose religious and political attitudes differed widely from his own, his address on Cavour reveals the distance that separated him from even that form of clericalism which is most tolerant in its views with regard to the relations between Church and State ; and one cannot but marvel at the strange want of comprehension and culpable sectarian levity of one who, in writing of Fogazzaro after his death, called him “ the last of the Guelphs,” insinuating that the policy he advocated, had it been logically carried out, would have led to a parliament whose corridors would have opened into “ the ante-chambers of sacristies ” and whose members would have “ worn the medal of the Madonna of Loreto dangling from their watch-chains side by side with that attesting their deputyship.” Fogazzaro a Guelph ? A Guelph he was, indeed, but of the same species as Manzoni who, in 1866, proposed to make Rome the capital of Italy to the horror

¹ Letter from A. Fogazzaro to Filippo Meda, Vicenza, April 12, 1896.

of many less fervent believers than himself, such as Massimo d'Azeglio or those who, when the Italian troops entered the Eternal City in '70, were almost childish in their demonstrations of delight. He was such a Guelph as Rosmini, who actually went the length of recommending the abolition of the first article of the statute. There is so strong a sense of liberty, so much of patriotic Italian sentiment in a certain form of "Guelphism," that the title "the last of the Guelphs" is one of honour for him who is capable of rightly reading and interpreting the history of Italy. But if the term be used to imply any confusing of powers, any mingling of spheres of action that are distinct by nature, then Fogazzaro is no Guelph. He is simply a Liberal. The logic of his political views led him in the very opposite direction to that which certain critics have sought to persuade us he pursued, namely, that of the moderately conciliatory policy. He was at bottom a separatist, and of this he made no secret. He possessed all of Cavour's confidence in the salutary effects of separation of Church and State. His idea of separation was certainly not that of such as regard it as a means of strangling and suffocating the life of the Church, or of incorporating religion with the State; rather was he persuaded that only when she should have achieved perfect freedom, should have reached that state of honesty which is born of freedom, would the Church be able to arouse modern society to an understanding of the true spirit of Christianity and contribute towards raising the standard of the latest phase of civilization. His conception of the Church was too lofty to allow him to think of her as co-involved in any way in the political interests of a nation, as eagerly seeking party support, she whose adamantine foundation is that "truth which passeth not away." It was natural that parties should exist; it was well that they should fight in the interests of social justice, but it was not the mission of the Church to participate in their strife and seek to benefit by it. Her mission it was to preach to all the great principles laid down in the Gospels, not to tell the individual how to vote. Amidst the mutability of all that surrounds us she must stand for what is eternal; she must not stoop to participate in a passing struggle, must not identify herself with groups or interests which a gust of wind suffices to scatter.

It was precisely his mysticism which caused Fogazzaro to hold aloof from any form of clericalism, even from that Christian Democracy he had advocated in *Daniele Cortis*, but without wishing to make it a "Church party."

Fogazzaro held firmly to the conviction that the Church must not compromise her immutable values on behalf of any one of the parties that are for ever succeeding one another. She must neither be republican in France nor monarchist in Italy, neither conservative nor democratic, she must simply be the Church always, in all countries and throughout all time. Such to him was the meaning of a free Church.

On the other hand, he believed that, with such a Church, the State would also abandon its narrow and suspicious defence of the *lay attitude* which is but opposition to religion, and of a *non-sectarianism* which is substantially atheism. He demanded a State that should be perfectly free from all unjustified ecclesiastical interference, but one also not hostile and inaccessible to the spirit of Christianity, not indifferent to certain fundamental religious aspirations that are not of the Church exclusively, but of the very nature of man himself, for whom both Church and State exist.

Men cannot be divided by artificial means. Fogazzaro held that, whereas sectarian separation, the outcome of an unsound theory, makes it appear, indeed, that State and Church mutually exclude each other, like two material objects which cannot both occupy the same place, there exists a separation which is of the very nature of man, and which, tending towards unity through distinction, enables us to see both Church and State as co-operating simultaneously from within and from without, for the elevation of humanity. Such a form of separation even while excluding the State from all direct interference in matters ecclesiastical, cannot allow it to ignore or, worse still, to scorn what is eternally human in religion ; will not cause it to look upon the faith of millions as something that, in compliance with the rules of separation, should be banished beyond its borders, nor render it oblivious to the mass of religious tradition inherent in the very civilization and life of a people. It was by such considerations as these that Fogazzaro was led to condemn utterly that narrow

and bigoted Latin *layism* which is but clericalism reversed, is the negation and ignorance of all spiritual values, the substitution of one form of dogmatism for another, which means exclusion and impoverishment, not the enriching and broadening of the life of a nation.

Between this *layism* and this clericalism it seemed to Fogazzaro that Cavour's formula pointed the broad highway of true liberty and opened up the vast horizons not of a formal reconciliation, but of a perfect harmony, lying far beyond the petty bickerings and strife of this era of crises.

CHAPTER XIV

HUMAN ASCENSIONS

THE close of the year 1897 saw the publication of the volume entitled *Poesie Scelte*, that contained the best of Fogazzaro's poetical works. The new year was destined to be entirely devoted to the study of the problem of evolution in its relation to faith and the Christian life. Fogazzaro was preparing for a fresh campaign in support of his idea, his zeal whetted by the approval that had been expressed by many Italian and foreign Catholics. Monsignor Bonomelli, in fact, had written to him as follows nearly a year before :

“ I can tell you something that will please you. At Fribourg in Switzerland there is a Catholic university of which the Pope thinks very highly, and to which I have recently sent three seminarists. They now write to me that the professor of philosophy, a very able Dominican, not only quotes Fogazzaro's theory concerning transformation with a daring that is rare indeed, but actually asserts in support of it that it is the theory of St. Thomas himself. I will give you further particulars when we meet.”¹

A little more than a year later Fogazzaro wrote to Monsignor Bonomelli :

“ I am deriving much satisfaction from a book I am now reading, entitled *Evolution and Dogma*. The author is Father Zahm, who is Professor of Philosophy at a Catholic university in America. Well, this book seems to be but an amplification of my own lecture entitled *For the Beauty of an Idea*. It contains such passages as this : ‘ It is wrong to declare that his descent from the ape vilifies man ; rather does it ennable the ape.’ How far we have travelled ! And to think that only yesterday the

¹ Letter from Monsignor Bonomelli to Antonio Fogazzaro, Cremona, April 7, 1896.

Civiltà Cattolica spoke of my views on evolution as those of a mere writer of fiction ! ”¹

Things were indeed moving rapidly, but also with that superficiality that was characteristic of the times. It was the moment of Americanism, that is to say, of a state of mind that was extremely vague and philosophically poor, but a moment also when Catholics thought they felt the breath of a greater freedom. What came to them from across the water they accepted eagerly in the light of a revelation. The theory of evolution, therefore, found a fertile soil and a numerous audience that was no longer hostile but actually sympathetic. Fogazzaro, indeed, was able to deliver three new lectures that were most favourably received.

The first of these, delivered in Paris at the Salle des Mathurins on the 8th of March 1898, and entitled *Le grand poète de l'avenir*, was Fogazzaro's official consecration, so to speak, by the cosmopolitan world of literature. The invitation had come from Edmond Rod and F. Brunetière, and henceforth his title to fame as a novelist was established in France.

The Paris lecture was immediately followed by one delivered in Rome on the 31st of March, in the *aula magna* of the Collegio Romano. This lecture was entitled *Progress in its Relation to Happiness*, and was completed by a third address—*Science and Pain*—delivered on the 22nd of May 1898, in Venice. These lectures were parts of the book Fogazzaro was then writing, which would contain all of his addresses that dealt with the subject of evolution.

The volume appeared in November 1898, under the title of *Human Ascensions*, and was preceded by a foreword which for loftiness and earnestness of sentiment and reflection is the best part of the book. Herein Fogazzaro sought to explain how the theory of evolution had led him to read in the great book of life the revelation of a Will engendering intelligence and affection, to discover in created nature itself the obligation to obey the Word that had shaped it, to contribute towards the accomplishment of a

¹ Letter from A. Fogazzaro to Monsignor Bonomelli, Montegaldà, October 26, 1897.

divine scheme the main lines of which science, it would seem, is destined to reveal to us. The fervour of pure and vital mysticism pervades these pages, which are all the more stimulating because he who pens them is no longer one straining to reconcile science and faith, but a poet who is a firm believer, and who speaks from his own experience of God in nature.

The favourable reception this theory of Christian evolutionism encountered could not fail, however, to arouse the animosity of the intransigent faction. Precisely at the moment when *Human Ascensions* appeared, the contention concerning a recent publication by Zahm was increasing in violence. In England, the Bishop of Newport had taken up its defence, as had also the *Tablet* and the *Dublin Review*, but in order to avoid a formal condemnation the translation had to be withdrawn from circulation. Monsignor Bonomelli himself, who, in an appendix to *Seguiamo la Ragione*, had given a favourable synopsis of the views expressed by Zahm, was constrained to dispatch a letter to the *Lega Lombarda*, wherein, "in compliance with the request of some very dear friends," he begged that he be not regarded as acquiescing in any hypothesis that was contrary to the teachings of the Church. The letter was reproduced by other newspapers. *Human Ascensions*, meanwhile, was in danger of being condemned.

It was when matters stood thus that Fogazzaro dispatched the following letter to Monsignor Bonomelli :

"MONSIGNORE AND HONOURED FRIEND,—I have just read your letter to the *Lega*. . . . It would have caused me much pain had not you yourself already informed me of certain circumstances. If you were able to perform this noble act of humility, it was because you are less deeply attached than I am to the doctrine that is assailed. Should my book be condemned I might hold my peace, but it would be impossible for me to utter a word of retraction, and my heart, my intellect, my whole being would continue to adhere to the ideas set forth in the foreword to *Human Ascensions*. It seems to me I should prefer to suffer martyrdom rather than retract. I am a poor creature spiritually, much weaker and more infirm than many of my friends realize; but to me the idea that creation was ordered for the purpose of producing intelligence and affection, that God may be glorified, seems to me so evident, raises me to such a pitch of enthusiasm, helps me so

materially in resisting temptation, that I should feel I was sinning against Truth, offending my Heavenly Father in relinquishing it.”¹

If further proof of the strength of Fogazzaro’s convictions be necessary, we are in possession of letters written in reply to several arguments that had been put forward by the two men holding different opinions. To Don Pietro Stoppani he wrote as follows :

“ . . . Allow me, first of all, to thank you for your kindness in writing to me and about me. You are well known to me, for I have heard you spoken of by many with great respect and affection, and I am therefore both honoured and comforted by this proof of your interest in me.

“ You say there are two enormous stumbling-blocks in the way. Let us discuss them candidly and simply, first acknowledging, once and for all, as a firmly established truth, that materialistic evolution, even should its basic hypothesis be one day scientifically established, can in nowise affect religion. In your opinion the first stumbling-block we encounter is that of the deeply rooted Christian tradition as it is generally understood. This does not seem to me to constitute a stumbling-block for the *orthodoxy* of our idea, but only for its diffusion among the less enlightened. This diffusion will undoubtedly be a lengthy process, but we need not concern ourselves with it at present. Let us diligently sow and water, and the Lord will see to it that our labours are not in vain. For the enlightened among the faithful, although they may indeed be few, that first stumbling-block no longer exists. You point out that free-thinkers, who are generally extremely ignorant concerning our religion, would be amazed did they know of the many and various interpretations of Genesis the Church tolerates, from that of St. Augustine down to that of our own contemporary, the visionary Jesuit, Father Hummelauer. They would be amazed did they know that this Jesuit speaks of the creation of woman, for example, as if no cultured Catholic any longer regarded it otherwise than as an allegorical dream sent by the Lord to the sleeping Adam.

“ The famous ‘ link ’ has not yet been discovered. There are those who declare that it has, but is this true ? Scientific re-

¹ Letter from A. Fogazzaro to Monsignor Bonomelli, Lonedo per Zugliano, November 4, 1898.

search and conclusions on this point are so strongly influenced by theological and anti-theological zeal, that it is difficult to see clearly amidst the smoke arising from this violent conflict. Let us not add to the difficulty, however. You write that no proofs have as yet been discovered of the existence of a law that would appear to be the mother of all the other laws of Nature ! This does not seem to me to be the case. On the contrary, innumerable proofs of this fundamental law have indeed been discovered. It embraces all organisms, and is by no means applicable to the human organism alone. We have discovered and possess proofs of evolution in many species. The clear, precise and definite nature of these proofs has already made it impossible for us to admit that many species of plants and animals were created as described by the generally accepted form of Hebrew-Christian tradition, and in the shape in which we now see them. To be a 'creationist' in the ancient sense, to accept the fact of the sudden *fiat*, means either to sin against truth revealed, against the Holy Ghost, in other words, or to admit that the Bible story cannot be taken literally : that instead of one single *fiat* for each living species there were many others at long intervals, for those species that to-day lie buried in the bowels of the earth or rest upon the shelves of our museums ; it means, in short, that one must relinquish the common tradition only to fall back upon what is absurd. To-day, if one be in good faith, one must accept the proofs of the general law. The manner by which it operates is as yet by no means clearly demonstrated ; nor is proof as yet forthcoming that it involves man himself. These considerations lessen the first difficulty very considerably.

" Let us now take the second stumbling-block, which I will call the sociological. Evolution and perfecting, you say, are correlative terms. This I cannot admit without qualifications. The law of evolution in itself works in two ways. Its effect, both as regards the species and as regards individuals, may be either progressive or retrogressive. The organism that fails to act according to its faculties, according to its nature, suffers involution, that is to say, evolution reversed. This may also be observed in individuals and in human societies, wherein the law of evolution works in a new way which is determined by the new spiritual element. The individual in whom the lower element—the original brute—gains ascendancy over the higher, degenerates towards the brute. Associations wherein individuals dominated by the lower element prevail, are doomed to perish. As for the law of heredity, it operates both for good and evil. The evil it

produces is more easily perceived than the good, and the taint of sin, disease and vice are apparently more readily transmitted than conditions of mental and physical sanity. It is their nature to spread ; and so true is this that when one considers the vast amount of human crime and corruption, one can but marvel that the whole of mankind be not rotten. But at this point a higher, a divine law intervenes, whose mode of action it is impossible to comprehend—the law to which I allude in the foreword to *Human Ascensions*. In the divine scheme of the universe the purpose of the law of evolution is to develop intelligence and affection that all creation may glorify God. The law of evolution is an instrument that might also serve to bring about in man the final, complete and enduring reversion to the brute. But it is God's will that it should serve rather to help the great mass of humanity in its ascensions, while at the same time it prevents the moral decline, the regression and final perdition of the individual. Given the infection of original sin, humanity, certain brilliant but fleeting ascensions in the Orient, in Greece and in Rome notwithstanding, would have degenerated past all redemption had it not been for the Incarnation. Christ, the prototype of man who has risen to the highest point of evolution, Christ, Who at the same time is the Son of God and His Father's equal, flooded humanity with the broad, inexhaustible and all-powerful waters of life, which flow ever, a mighty current, in the direction of Goodness and Truth. The living and omnipotent Christ ensures the progress of humanity. Christian associations have given proof of their indestructibility, and the future is theirs. In them Christ is at work even though the majority may fail to see Him, to believe in Him. In Christian civilizations love and intelligence are developed to an extent achieved by no others ; in them the ties that bind man to man are strengthened, and they impose a law of brotherhood it is impossible not to recognize, a law which is becoming ever more strongly identified with material well-being. I see this even in the conflicts which to-day appear to be widening the chasms that separate the classes. I see also that, although the combatants may be unconscious of His action, the Almighty is really directing this hatred among men towards an end that shall be all love. The result of the struggle between Socialists and Conservatives (considered as a whole and apart from any ramifications that may be produced by the fluctuations of the contest) will make for economic and social justice. To accomplish this God will make use of atheists and blasphemers because this is in keeping with His greatness and glory, and also

in order that no one may be glorified before Him. Even His faithful, and were they saints, can neither know nor foretell how the Almighty will shape human associations in order to bring them gradually nearer to that state He has promised us as His Kingdom. But we may nevertheless know and foretell, founding our conclusions on the teachings of science itself, that by virtue of natural selection, those who cherish Christ in their hearts and live by His rule, those who consciously and of their own free will recognise the supreme finality of the Divine Scheme, being justly considered in the light of their continuity through the centuries, considered as permanent individuals, will outlive all others. Natural selection operates in their favour because they will be spiritually the most sane, the strongest, or in other words, the best adapted to that social state to which humanity will have attained by the power of the Will of God, Who, little by little, is ordering, transforming and reorganizing it, *volentem nolentem*, according to His own plan. These will be *the elect*, the chosen ones.

“ Such is my belief. . . . I know not whether, on the whole, you will find my answer satisfactory. Perhaps not. My faith in the concept I have formed of God and the universe is very strong, very deep-rooted. Unfortunately it is but the faith of one to whom a sort of vision has been vouchsafed, who is still filled with it, who still quivers with the emotion of it, but who possesses neither sufficient knowledge to enable him to verify his creed by means of science, nor sufficient genius to construct for it a solid philosophical basis. Let us pray that one may be raised up who, possessing my faith, may be free from my deficiencies.— Believe me, ever yours faithfully,

“ A. FOGAZZARO.

“ *P.S.*—I see that I have failed to reply to the last part of your letter. According to my conception, man is the crown of earthly creation. I share the opinion of that German naturalist, whose name I cannot recall, who wrote that animals are descended from man, not man from the animals! He means, as do I also, that man has been in course of preparation ever since the creation of the first living cell; that this cell was as the root of a tree of which man is the summit. The lower animals are the branches of the tree; they are deviations from man, or deviations from the straight line that has borne him. The physical creation of the world came to an end when the first human couple appeared; the Creator reposes, that is to say, He produces no new species;

the products of His unceasing labour do but undergo transformation.”¹

This letter, written in all honesty of purpose, serves to convince us that if at that time condemnation had overtaken him, Fogazzaro’s soul would have been rent by one of the most painful struggles of his whole life, the struggle between his faith as a Catholic and his honesty as a thinker. But he was spared. Once again the Congregation of the Index gave proof of the tolerance that distinguished the policy of Leo XIII. in dealing with questions arising between the Church and modern thought.

Human Ascensions, therefore, represented to Catholics a loophole through which they might freely scan fresh horizons. It was one of the books around which the spiritualistic leanings of that period centred—a sort of bridge spanning the gulf between liberal Catholicism and the movement of religious reform that was maturing in the minds of the rising generation.

The younger generation, who were just beginning to take up life’s responsibilities, had freed themselves from the stagnation of positivism which had so long held undisputed sway, and were already conscious of the very evident signs of one of those returns to the religious sentiment that invariably follow periods of unbelief and practical materialism. There were groups who modestly but staunchly declared their Christian ideals. Such was the Roman group by which the *Ora Presente* was founded. During the winter of 1894 Dora Melegari had summoned Paul Desjardins to Rome to deliver a lecture illustrating the purposes of the *Union pour l'action morale*, which had been the result of his little book entitled *Le devoir présent*. The lecture had electrified the public, so thoroughly did it respond to the unexpressed aspirations of many. Desjardins was therefore invited to address a narrower circle of friends in Dora Melegari’s drawing-room. Among those who assembled to hear him were Guido Salvadori and other contributors to a very modest periodical called *L’Alba*. The drawing-room meetings soon became frequent and the attendance numerous. It was finally decided to issue

¹ Letter from A. Fogazzaro to Don Pietro Stoppani, Vicenza, June 10, 1899.

a bulletin of the Union that was in course of formation, known already as the *Unione per il bene*, and Guido Salvadori and Antonietta Giacomelli were appointed to compile it. The word "bulletin" being judged uninteresting, the publication was christened *L'Ora Presente*.

To the *Ora Presente* group Fogazzaro appeared almost in the light of a herald who had preceded them, walking companionless on the way they would presently travel. Nor was the popularity he enjoyed with the younger generation confined to the Roman group. He was beginning to possess the authority of a "teacher" in matters concerning the spiritual life, amongst those throughout the land who were waiting, who were awakening to the new breath of religious life. From silent, provincial towns came appeals for advice from priests and laymen, upon whose lives new hope and fresh thought had suddenly shone forth; appeals there were also from distant monasteries, where in all times the leaven of mystic revolt has been jealously guarded.

At this time the apostle of ideas seemed to have become more interesting than the writer of fiction. Souls turned to him with eager sympathy as to one able to give expression to what was still unexpressed in this Christian renascence.

CHAPTER XV

THE MAN OF THE WORLD

FOGAZZARO meanwhile was at work on the second volume of the trilogy which *The Saint* would complete. This novel caused him much perplexity as regards his responsibility both as a Christian and an artist.

This very uncertainty on the part of its author proves that the new novel had not been conceived in that same state of spiritual simplicity and lucidity which is reflected in *The Patriot*. That work had been composed at a moment of untroubled moral ease; here all of Fogazzaro's anxieties, the torment resulting from the contrast between his religiosity and his sensualism, once more gain the upper hand. The pure transparency attained in the book that reflected the memory of surroundings that were virtuous and vigorous, is again troubled. The admirable and outspoken morality of the Valsolda people, the dear, sympathetic faces of the fathers who loved God and Italy, are become darkened. The *Man of the World* is a profoundly painful book to him who reads it aright. Fogazzaro's honesty is so great that he is incapable of hiding anything, and this novel is practically a confession to a new period of inner perturbation; to a passing but ardent return to mental conditions that had seemed for ever banished; to the bitter struggle against the flesh from which, through suffering, he had achieved emancipation and purification. . . . A woman again appears upon the threshold of his sensibilities, and again he thrills to all the sadness and passion that lie in the "great, magnetic eyes" of Jeanne Dessalle.

Who was she? It matters little what her true name was. Jeanne Dessalle lives in very truth; she is no poetic phantom composed of elements taken from other women, from other books. She lives and fascinates, and although her first steps

upon the path of Fogazzaro's life are encompassed by silence and mystery, nevertheless we are able to trace them.

As early as 1887, indeed, he wrote as follows from a solitary Alpine retreat :

"There is a lady here who is both young and exceedingly attractive, and in whose company we spend several hours every day. She is very handsome, dresses with elegance, is talented, and would appear to possess a very emotional temperament. I believe she really loves her husband, who is a young man of excellent qualities, but I fear her imagination is somewhat erratic. She talks with me a great deal, and expresses her opinions concerning my affairs with the utmost frankness; sometimes I doubt whether her expressions of disapproval be really sincere, whether they be not prompted rather by a strange love of contradicting, of provoking. Having failed to upset my equanimity she has altered her attitude somewhat, and has become less stinging. She asks me all sorts of questions—even the boldest and most unusual. Last night she questioned me concerning my religious beliefs and practices, and earnestly besought me to convert her. . . ." ¹

Does one not already perceive the outlines of the woman with her enigmatic nature, differing so widely from Elena, who will have her day when Elena—the woman whose love exalts—shall be far removed from her poet for ever? Are not the very scenes of the novel descriptions of real moments that have existed in fact, in the course of the struggle against a strange passion?

Of Fogazzaro's life we know enough to lead us to conclude that the decisive moment in that strange drama arrived sometime during the years following his great sorrow—sometime between 1895 and 1900.

I recall how emphatically and repeatedly he declared, both in the course of conversation and in writing, that "what had saved Piero was the fact that he had never really loved Jeanne Dessalle. They were kept apart by the total discrepancy of their views." These words give us the true key to the hidden and silent romance. The friend of Elena had doubtless felt the

¹ Letter to E——, August 5, 1887.

fascination of the woman's great, sad eyes, but for years his soul had withstood the sentiment of one who, after all, could never have brought herself to overcome for love of him that fierce passion of pride and disbelief that sustained her opposition to his desire. Perhaps the memory of Elena and of her great sacrifice lay between them. But more powerful still than the shade of the absent one in preventing a close union, was the insurmountable barrier formed by their spiritual disparity. All she asked of the poet was the union of souls. For him—and of this he was well aware—there could be no union save in a common faith, save in the mutual striving towards things divine. While she implored him to lead her to his God, in whom—like Elena, but in a different way—she did not believe, he was alive to all the icy pride in the nature of this woman without sin, and trembled lest in her his soul should find its death. To her he was the light she had sought in vain ; to him she was darkness and blighting frost. Thus did each suffer and torment the other ; and it was perhaps the intensity of his suffering that had caused his sensual desires to flash forth so tragically at a moment of weakness wherein she had seemed to him more humble, sadder, more confiding and appealing.

It was, as he himself confessed, but a flash of passion, so fleeting that it left the stainless woman unscathed ; but by its light he saw the murky depths of that strange perturbation he had been seeking to analyse and explain to himself since the first moment his glance had met hers, and he fully sensed the humiliation and the danger of yielding to the impure fascination of a fresh passion. It may have been the voices of the living or the voices of the dead that spoke within him in accents of bitter reproach, and it is beyond doubt that the memory of his sacred sorrow was instrumental in rescuing him definitely from his state of error and arousing his sense of duty ; for this point, which might well have marked the beginning of his moral decline, marks instead the beginning of his ascension and of a new epoch in his soul's history. The story itself seems to point to one of those sudden actions of grace by which the course of his life was radically altered. For him there came conversion.

The personality of the real Jeanne, however, enshrouded in

the melancholy of her purposeless existence, pervades the book. Behind the artificialities of the plot . . . she looms ever, filling every page with that suggestive sense of mystery that the presence of a secret and unseen guest diffuses in a great house with which we are unfamiliar. The dedication itself tells us clearly that the book is hers, and this knowledge lends an element of dramatic intimacy to the novel which renders it impossible to regard it merely as a work of art and in the spirit of dispassionate criticism that pronounces judgment solely from the aesthetic standpoint.

Rather do we feel how intimately it is connected with the life of Fogazzaro, and we can readily understand how he came to write of it that no one of his books had reacted upon him as this one did. An analysis of *The Man of the World* is the analysis of a crisis in Fogazzaro's soul, and we believe we are justified in seeking in the light and shadow of this novel the light and shadow of an epoch in its author's life.

/ The story is connected with that of *The Patriot* through its hero Piero Maironi, who is the son of Franco, conceived at Isola Bella on the eve of war. His father had died in 1860 in consequence of a wound ; his mother soon followed her husband to the grave. Confided to the care of the Marchese Scermin and his wife who resided in a small town in Venetia, in which it is easy to recognize Vicenza, Piero grows up amidst surroundings that are at once narrow, devout and suffocating, wherein his nature, in itself vivacious, thrown back upon its own resources, develops painfully along lines that are ever wavering between mysticism and sensualism. /

Very early in life, after a fall that covered him with shame, he had sought refuge from the temptations of the flesh in matrimony, wedding Elisa Scermin, his guardians' only daughter, a young girl depicted as both inarticulate and cold, and who becomes insane soon after their marriage. / This is the prologue ; the real story begins when Piero has already practically forgotten his wife, who has been relegated to an asylum near Brescia. We immediately see him as what he is—a soul torn between upsurgings of sensuality and certain mystical aspirations which, were he free, would lead him to the cloister. . . . /

To such a man comes temptation in the shape of Jeanne Desalle, a Florentine, separated from a brutal husband. Incidents of no importance lead to an acquaintance between the Dessalles and Piero, who is immediately impressed by the woman, and realizes that he might easily fall a victim to her fascinations. There could be but one safe refuge for him—the cloister—but these sacred precincts are closed to him by the fact of his marriage. Torn by passion and indecision, he confides in an aged priest, a friend of his family, Don Giuseppe Flores, who lives in the Montegalda villa in the plain that stretches between the Berico range and the Euganean Hills.

The character of Don Giuseppe is also taken from life—he is Fogazzaro's uncle, Don Giuseppe Fogazzaro—but in him reality become poetry and beauty. Don Giuseppe Flores, indeed, is one of the most perfect figures Fogazzaro has ever drawn. Above the troubled and diseased consciences of a generation that came after him he towers like a soaring mountain peak kissed by the rosy light of a sunset which to his faith is the light of dawn. In him Fogazzaro expressed his ideal of the Catholic priesthood, as he would never again be able to do with equal clearness. He made him the herald of that church reform of which he dreamed, the preparer of the path the Saint would tread ; but he is a precursor who is greater than he for whom he prepares the way. In Don Giuseppe we have one of those unsophisticated beings overflowing with compelling and manly power, whose straightforward, simple and perfect faith—albeit rich in thought and founded upon true knowledge—sets them above any religious crisis. Don Giuseppe is the priest of the generation who made Italy, and at the same time the man of whom the Church stands in greatest need to-day : a great heart that illumines his intellect, a spirit of charity that is all-embracing, a mind turning towards what is divine and eternal, not for motives of vain curiosity, but from thirst of meditation and prayer. He is neither a philosopher, a critic, nor a reformer—he is simply the true priest.

After his interview with Don Giuseppe, the better to illustrate Piero Maironi's extreme weakness of purpose, Fogazzaro drags him back into the sphere of Jeanne's influence. But on a certain night when she might have yielded to his desire, while Piero waits

in hopeful suspense, there comes a knock upon his door and a telegram is handed to him which tells him that his wife is dying, but that she has regained her reason and wishes to see him. This is the final divine summons that separates them for ever. /

And now the better Fogazzaro, the mystical interpreter of the hidden workings of the Almighty in the soul of man, the poet of death and of simple virtue extricates himself from the tangle of sensualism and worldliness wherein he himself had been struggling in his book. Again he casts himself into the clear pool of Christian suffering, gives himself up to the flow of tears that sanctify, and reaches the highest point in artistic creation the work contains, for henceforth, absorbed in the contemplation of death, he becomes practically oblivious to all preoccupations of an artistic nature.

The magnificent description of Elisa's death is a piece of writing that moves the reader as it moved its author.

It is the suggestive beauty he sees in death that brings about the miracle of Piero Maironi's definite transformation. Amidst the august solemnity of Elisa's painful agony he hears God's last and final summons. While Don Giuseppe is saying Mass, Piero sees before him the words: *Magister adest et vocat te*, words which, at Praglia in his early youth, had struck him as containing a first summons. / He is now thoroughly convinced that he has a mission to perform in the Church. / This element of outward revelation comes but to set the seal upon the revulsion of feeling that has taken place within him, and thus Elisa's dying prayer that he may regain his lost faith, is answered even before Death has placed his hand upon her eyes.

/ Piero's life ends here, and here the life of the Saint begins. /

Thus in this work we have fresh proof that Fogazzaro could write well only when he thought and loved well; proof that throughout his compositions form is but as a wave that rises and falls as within him the spirit ascends in harmony with his ideal or is dragged down by what is contrary to it. / When Fogazzaro is inwardly uplifted, when his truest and purest sentiments are exalted, his whole art ascends, his whole style vibrates and his language becomes clearer, more precise and expressive. The

nearer he draws to the fires of his own conscience the more he feeds upon his own sublime passions, the greater he is as a writer. But when he becomes cold, when he loves and senses less keenly that which in reality is his very being, when his eye is withdrawn from the contemplation of his inner world and of the ideals he serves, then does his artistic creation shrivel and collapse like a sail before a failing wind. As an artist he becomes flaccid; as a writer, colourless.

Such is the law of Fogazzaro's life as a writer. Even in those early days when he was writing *Malombra* he himself admitted as much when he declared that in order to create he must be conscious of inner purity. Even at that time art, to him, was religion, and he felt himself as the priest who, if he be not free from sin, may not perform the sacred rites, may not impart grace to others if he be not at peace with himself.

CHAPTER XVI

A PERIOD OF PREPARATION

FOGAZZARO set out to accomplish his religious mission at the very moment when the first signs appeared in Italy of that movement towards mysticism which was the prelude to modernism.

Piero Maironi, hidden from the world, was first aroused by the "new apologetics" of Blondel and Laberthonnière, whose writings had reached us through von Hügel.

Maurice Blondel, a disciple of Ollé-Laprune, by means of his work : *L'action : Essai d'une critique de la vie et d'une science de la pratique*, a book which to-day is not to be procured, had pointed out a new way of solving those grave problems with which the religious sense was struggling, confronted, on one hand, by the philosophy of Kant and on the other by historical criticism. Written in a style whose density and concentration render it extremely obscure, and imbued with the German spirit, the work nevertheless remains the corner-stone of that school which, by assuming an attitude of determined opposition to scholastic intellectualism, sought confirmation of the supernatural not by means of ratiocination, but through the inner moral experience of a truth that has been "lived." According to Blondel no demonstration can possibly create in us a faith in the supernatural ; such faith can spring only from a deep-seated action, from our willingness to feel truth within ourselves. Blondel undoubtedly possessed a lofty, pure, upright and pious spirit, and his attempt was inspired by his earnest desire to help many who were painfully seeking a renewal of apologetics on a philosophical basis. But his lack of clearness alone would have sufficed to limit the circulation of his book had not his ideas been taken up and skilfully elucidated by a more intelligible writer—Father L. Laberthonnière, a priest of the Oratory, who

had already begun to tread the same path, taking his initiative from Ollé-Laprune, whom he had looked upon as his master since December 1891.¹ In his little volume, *Le dogmatisme moral*, which appeared in 1898, he gave a general outline of his mystical philosophy. This essay is based upon a clever analysis of the various forms of dogmatism—the empirie, which considers the world as a system of things experienced, the intellectual which considers it as a system of ideas, the sceptical according to whose teachings we are condemned to move in a world of appearances from which there is no escape, and, finally, the illusory, which, in its empiric form, consists of the belief that we draw our being from sensation, and in its idealistic form attributes an ontological value to ideas as such. According to Laberthonnière our being is not derived either from sensations or from pure thought ; were this the case, if exterior reality entered into us in its finished form, there could be neither error nor illusions. If ideas were put into us, we should all think alike. But, on the contrary, truth is not outside of us but within us, and it is from the inside that “we ourselves derive what our ideas contain.” In order then that ideas may be our own and be really ideas, we must have “lived them.” It is therefore necessary that we find them within ourselves if we are to know God and other beings truly and well. But to find them we must lay ourselves open to them and cause them to dwell within us. To accomplish this, it is important above all things to detach ourselves from the sway of the external world of phenomena, or in other words, from the illusion that being is in things external. And this can be achieved only by an act of the will, by dying to ourselves the death of the mystic—the death of which St. Augustine and St. Paul speak. By means of this act of the will we seek to obtain the absolute certainty that He who is that God, is neither something that may be attained by vain gropings in space, nor an idea that may be discovered by means of dialectic demonstrations, but the life of our life, the very being of our being. Thus must we deify ourselves, not in the pantheistic sense, but by the communings of our will with the Will that is Divine. Our wishes

¹ See Giovanni Gentile, *Il modernismo e i rapporti tra religione e filosofia*, p. 22.

must be God's wishes ; thus this act of the will becomes an act of love, of the love that has nothing in common with desire that leads us to transform the object beloved into ourselves, but rather the love that leads us to transform ourselves into the object beloved. For God is not a geometrical theorem, but a living reality ; we do not prove Him, rather do we desire and love Him.

"It is by loving that we get beyond ourselves, that we lift ourselves above our own temporal individuality. It is by loving that we find God and all other beings, that we rediscover ourselves. Nor do we find God and all the other beings and our true selves for any purpose other than to love again. And thus it is ever, without pause or ending. There is no end to love, for it is self-generating, it is eternally reborn from itself, eternally renewed and expanded. Love is at once light, heat and life."

Fogazzaro was deeply impressed by this pamphlet by Laberthonnière. Had he been a greater philosopher, in the name of Rosmini whom he loved and had studied, he would have repudiated all that the suggestive daring of this new system of apologetics contained of unilateral subjectivity, and would have realized what inner contradictions would result from a too ready acceptance of the doctrine of immanence, from a complete disregard of the rights of ratioeination, he who yearned for a Catholicism more in conformity with the demands of reason, and who in his essays on Rosmini had glorified precisely that religion which was not opposed to research and to the expansion of man's intellectual faculties.

In Fogazzaro, however, emotion outweighed his power of auto-criticism. Alone his religious sentiment remained ever superior to the apparent philosophical contradictions of different epochs in his life. Be this as it may, his conversion in early youth formed a bond of union between Laberthonnière and himself. That had been a conversion through the sentiments rather than a return by the paths of dialectics, and the book that had so greatly helped him was the work of Gratry who, through Ollé-Laprune, was the original inspirer of the "new apologetics." Fogazzaro therefore gave himself up to this system without stopping to analyse his position as a Rosminian, acquiescing in

its profound Christian mysticism, its vigorous assertion of the supernatural, joining in that species of sacred chant which runs through the writings of this disciple of Malebranche. He mistrusted ratiocination, or rather he found in this new mystic tendency (and the fact explains why so many others turned towards it at this time) a refuge against reason itself, which, side by side with Bible criticism, was striving to oust orthodoxy from its traditional position.

In those depths of the soul wherein love speaks, he felt himself safe in God at last—safer than he could ever be in the rational constructions of traditional theology.

A short poem which he published at this time entitled *Alla Verità* (To Truth) was his first act of open participation in that more intimate preparation of modernism which, during the closing years of the pontificate of Leo XIII., already had its propagandists and was making its first proselytes. Poetically the value of these verses is insignificant; Fogazzaro's art was not equal to the matter of his conception; the wing of his inspiration was not sufficiently strong to waft him upwards to the heaven of mysteries. This poem, however, marks the moment of his turning towards the new system of apologetics and to a mystic current destined definitely to influence the closing years of his life. Had he been able to foresee that in Italy this current would lead to an immanentism that is no more Christian than that revealed in the *Lettere di un prete modernista* (Letters of a Modernist Priest), he would have yielded less readily to its attraction, would indeed have analysed its action in himself and have perceived the dangers of which he became aware during the closing years of his life. But it being always difficult for him to deal with philosophical problems, he was influenced above all else by what there was in Laberthonnière of "truth that had been loved and lived." In him he felt the spirit of reaction against scholastic intellectualism, against latent sensationalism, against a false rationalism dominating philosophy and theology; he realized the great honesty of purpose of this thinker who did not pause to trifl with conceptions, but strove, by following in the footsteps of the mystics, to reach the hidden God, the God Who is Reality, the God Whom the highest intellects fail to

reach, and Whom, not infrequently, the humblest hearts hold enshrined.

Fogazzaro did not see the rocks upon which the new system of apologetics was bound to suffer shipwreck. He did not pause to inquire how it could be brought into full harmony with the most profound teachings of the philosophy of the Church which has never allowed ratiocination to be suppressed or even considered as of no avail in the search for truth. He felt only that the perturbation of men's consciences and the vagaries into which philosophy had fallen demanded a solution through mysticism, which should enable these consciences to withstand the assaults of criticism ; he felt the need of having our life in God and not in a symbol ; the need of finding Him by casting aside empty concepts that are not life-giving. If a renewal of the Catholic spirit were possible, it must begin at the very root in a fuller communion between each individual and the living, loving Reality ; it must be an entirely inner renewal, a return to the Fountainhead of all that is good and of all true liberty which is within us.

At the very time his thought was developing in this direction and immediately after the publication of his poem, *Alla Verità*, one of those sudden impulses of his artistic nature moved Antonio Fogazzaro to devote himself for a period to the writing of plays. These sudden returns to earth were always characteristic of him. It would seem to us at times that he had definitely ascended towards celestial contemplation when suddenly the strong roots of his humanity would again draw him back to laugh and weep with us. He had ascended into the clouds "in search of pure Truth," and here he was again "in the heart of a crushed and miserable creature," amidst the repulsive moral and physical infirmities of the inmates of a poorhouse. His was indeed a restless nature, ever in conflict with itself. At this time I received the following lines from him :

" You have probably seen my verses in the *Rassegna*. Giuseppe Giacosa has begged me to send him something for the *Lettura* of December 1st. His request reached me a week ago, and by the 15th the manuscript must be in Milan. . . . I intend to send in a little drama in tabloid form and in dialect, entitled

Il Garofano Rosso (The Red Carnation), which is partly comedy and partly tragedy. This is a style in which I find it very easy to write, and which amuses my *lower* intellect while it fails to satisfy the higher.”¹

Giuseppe Giacosa, who was the person most directly responsible for this theatrical attempt, found himself in possession of a most original work of art, that was powerful and daring both in its conception and “in the diabolical cynicism of its handling.” He was enthusiastic over it. It was, indeed, a Fogazzaro heretofore undreamed of who revealed himself in this brief drama. The poet of sentimental idealism herein laid bare another aspect of his soul.

The Red Carnation proved an utter failure on the boards of the *Teatro Manzoni* at Milan, where it was produced. The audience followed the first part of the short act with curiosity and appreciation, aroused by the clever dialogue, every word of which is as the swift chipping of the sculptor’s all-revealing chisel. The audience laughed because they believed it to be the author’s sole purpose to provoke mirth. But towards the close of the act, when it was discovered that the smile was but superficial, and that beneath it lay all the obscure tragedy of human malevolence and death in all its sordid reality, a shudder of repulsion ran through the house, which resulted in a lively protest against the deception of which the public had been the victims. The play was indignantly hissed and the audience dispersed, bewildered and disconcerted, having failed to comprehend precisely what Fogazzaro had meant to convey by that fragment of repulsive realism, placed upon the stage regardless of the public’s sensitive eyes and ears.

The failure of his play, however, did not discourage its author, who set about writing another short drama, wherein he sought to seize the opposite side of reality. In *Ritratto Mascherato* (The Masked Portrait) he pays fresh homage to Truth, seeking it in the exquisitely loving heart of a woman, a wife, a true believer. He had written this play in December for the *Neue Freie Presse*, and Giacosa was of opinion that by means of this work Fogazzaro

¹ Letter to T. G. S., November 9, 1901.

would reinstate himself with the public whom he had offended by the realistic cynicism of his first attempt.

The general public, however, who had been ruffled by the diabolical realism of *The Red Carnation*, was again ruffled by the pious realism of *The Masked Portrait*. The non-success of this play was even more complete than that of its predecessor, and the public protested even more violently. As they had rebelled against the revelation of what is most infernal in the heart of man, so they now rebelled against the revelation of what is most divine in the heart of woman.

This second failure served to deter Fogazzaro from wasting any further time and energy in dramatic composition. Taken as a whole, however, this excursion into the realms of drama, with its peculiar qualities and with all its faults, can be regarded only as a brief episode, serving to complete the intellectual portrait of the author and to illustrate the innumerable contrasts and still youthful versatility of his nature. It is but a passing mood whose roots have not pierced far below the surface ; it is as a brief parenthesis ; a struggle carried on in what he called "the lower spheres" of his spirit.

While Fogazzaro was engaged upon these theatrical compositions he received an invitation which afforded him the liveliest satisfaction both as a believer and as an Italian. The ironclad *Garibaldi* lay in the port of Genoa, and Monsignor Bonomelli had been invited to bless the flag which the Genoese ladies were presenting to the ship.

But so great was the prelate's humility that he turned to one whom he deemed more capable than himself of giving expression to sentiments that were his own. It was to Fogazzaro that he addressed his appeal to compose the prayer. Fogazzaro obeyed the summons with enthusiasm. The lines are but few that he penned with greater joy and fervour than these which were destined to sink deep into the hearts of Italy's sailor-lads, to soar heavenward from their lips, under unfamiliar skies and in far countries.

Meanwhile he was living his silent, inner life of meditation, research, struggle and mystical impulse, a life with which but few

were acquainted. His correspondence reveals how his yearning for what is divine became ever more intense ; reveals also a growing interest in the spirit of church reform and in those religious studies which characterise this epoch.

FROM FOGAZZARO'S LETTERS

VICENZA, *April 30, 1902.*

I have never been in such close communion with the souls of my daughters as I am at the present moment. I thank God for having bestowed them upon me as they are, and I feel that a new wave of uplifting purpose comes to me from them. It seems almost as if they also feel this ; that their affection for me, which, indeed, has always been deep and tender, contains something that is new, that cannot be expressed in words. Is this perhaps due to the solemnity of my sixty years, that ring a muffled warning to me, as to my family ? Or is it due to other causes ? I cannot say. You see, my dear friend, that I speak to you almost as were I talking to myself or addressing inanimate objects.

(Letter to T. G. S.)

VICENZA, *December 27, 1902.*

DEAR AND REVERED FRIEND,— . . . I have a great longing to hear your spoken word, and, when the winter is past, I promise myself that I will go and listen to it. During the last few months I have lived much in the current of those religious ideas which, in the Catholic camp, represent the future and life itself. The writings of Loisy, Houtin and Tyrrell, and conversations with Semeria, Father Gazzola, Don Brizio and Father Genocchi, have stirred and enlightened me, and, if you will, disturbed my soul's peace at times. But the disturbance was of the sort of which Tyrrell says that it may easily be mistaken for a deadly fever, whereas it is but the fever of a period of development. The perusal of these works has finally made clear to me the meaning of something Semeria said to me years ago, namely, that a thorough knowledge of Bible criticism is indispensable. In fact, a knowledge of the firmly established results of the study of the Scriptures, although it may kill a faith that is weak, is not only invigorating to a faith that is strong, but also broadens and deepens the conception of the divine, and is therefore most efficacious in preparing that evolution in the interpretation of dogma which the times demand.

In Rome I heard much that was interesting concerning the Committee for the study of the Bible which the Pope appointed without consulting the body represented by the Secretary of State, and which Rampolla consequently refused to recognize until all the appointments had been altered.

I have also read Harnack's famous book, and I regard it as extremely dangerous, precisely because it sets forth so many things that are true and of which Catholics are justly proud.

It is more than ever to be hoped that the divorce bill will be thrown out. The determination with which the fight for civil reform in a matter of such difficulty is carried on, a reform concerning the merits of which but few are competent to judge, shows it to be the outcome of antagonism to religion. Meanwhile I am doing my best to keep the conflict on civil ground. There is little there to inflame the passions of those who are opposed to the bill and nothing for its champions to laugh about.

(Letter to Monsignor Geremia Bonomelli.)

VICENZA, *February 12, 1903.*

A tendency to intolerance in religious discussion is one of my weaknesses also, my dear friend. It is a very human weakness, and suffices in itself to explain the fact that religious wars have always been the fiercest. I hope that in this respect the writings of Tyrrell and Father Bremond's visit will have greatly helped me. They should help me to regard the views of others concerning God with respectful consideration, no matter how widely they may differ from my own, if they be but sincere. We who have our own views find ourselves in daily conflict with others who believe differently, and we must cultivate great gentleness would we win only a few to our way of thinking. What is more irritating to us in certain Catholics who differ from us, than their exasperated and exasperating tone? Shall we ourselves, then, sin in the same way? These are arguments I employ with myself who am a great sinner in this respect. . . . I have finished the second chapter of the novel, after having recast it completely, and I have devoted it almost entirely to the description of a meeting of Catholic reformers, many of whom hold conflicting opinions. Their discussion has already cost me a good deal of trouble, and even now I may not let it stand eventually as it is. Last night at one sitting, on the other hand, I wrote the end of the chapter wherein Jeanne Dessalle discovers that Maironi is not the friar, but the

gardener at the monastery. Now I shall have to devote all my attention to him.

(Letter to T. G. S.)

TONEZZA, July 22, 1903.

DEAR FRIEND,—God is very merciful, infinitely merciful. . . . I have had some days of terrible inner distress, of mortal depression, although I gave no outward sign of my condition. But let me tell you how God has delivered and consoled me. I was returning one day by train from Vicenza to Velo, greatly depressed and saddened by the attacks of the Evil Spirit and by the knowledge of my own weakness of purpose. When the train entered the valley I went out to the platform and lost myself in the contemplation of the fields and hills. It was then that the understanding of God's tender fatherhood came to me, and I experienced an ardent longing to throw myself into His arms, with something in my heart of that sense of affectionate inculpation a son might feel towards the father who had forsaken him ; with the words and tears that recall promises made and demand their fulfilment. The response to this mood came without delay—a response so gracious, so entrancing ! For the first time perhaps in my long life (alas, how sluggish has my affection been !) I realized in my *heart* the affinity between the sentiment I cherish for my earthly father and that I cherish for my Heavenly Father. I allowed my mind to dwell upon this. I told myself that filial affection was implanted within us to guide us and serve us as an example in developing the supreme affection. I told myself (I who loved my father, especially at certain periods of our life together, with inexpressible tenderness) that in loving him I had had no thought of self ; that it would never have entered my head to expect a recompense for my affection ; that every act of homage paid to my father had filled me with joy ; that the slightest word spoken against him had been as a knife in my heart ; that I would have given my life for him without dreaming that I was doing anything in the least unusual, and that this was precisely the way in which I should love God also. My heart overflowed with infinite joy in the realization of the tenderness of Divine Mercy, and I felt as I might have done had my earthly father enfolded me in his embrace after pardoning me for my transgressions. I no longer even felt the existence of these transgressions, no longer felt the weight of my sins against the Lord, was no longer tormented by bitter doubt in matters of faith, or rather should I say, I felt that all this had become as naught, that it had all been

swept away by the great love that bound me to my Heavenly Father.

(Letter to T. G. S.)

It was at this very moment that an event transpired that was of great importance in the effect it was destined to have upon the Church, and with which the greater part of Fogazzaro's future religious experiences are closely connected. This event forced the writer to recall his attention from the contemplation of the world within him and fix it upon the things of the world in which he had his material being.

Pope Leo XIII. died on July 20, 1903, and his passing held the sorrowing attention not only of the Italian people, but of the Catholics of every clime. This aged pontiff, a humanist and a poet, "the earthly, but at the same time the invisible regent of souls, which he governed from that cloud-enveloped Sinai, the Vatican," as Fogazzaro described him in *La Stampa*, ended his days amidst an emotion so profound as to concentrate upon him the attention not only of those of his own faith, but of men of all faiths, of men professing no faith at all.

"All the spiritual power of the Papacy in this modern world, from which it appears so completely detached, was revealed by the death of this Pope who had been the first to reign without territory, in the sovereign grandeur of lord of spirits redeemed in Christ. In this venerable sage, almost diaphanous in aspect, who was all soul and intellect, whose body the years had consumed, who lived concealed within the walls of the sacred palaces, surrounded by the splendours accumulated by generations that have passed away, splendours that are the heritage of the Roman Church, the nations felt the existence of an Idea that still flourishes, saw the mystic centre towards which gravitate millions of souls throughout the world, saw the guardian of truths against which many may contend, but to which no one can be indifferent. This frail pontiff, white of face and draped in garments of white, who was dying there in the Eternal City, was not so much a man as a flaming faith, burning steadily amidst the things that pass away and are no more; a faith that pervades the life of all Christian peoples, that exerts its sway even there where it is denied, that by its action, both direct and indirect, has mysteriously influenced the whole history of human progress. His passing, therefore, diffused a sense of religious silence wherein

for a moment one could measure the vastness and power of that great spiritual empire, the Church, of that kingdom without boundaries that reaches even unto the infinite and eternal."¹

Fogazzaro was deeply affected by the august majesty of this passing. Although he was of the number of those who had not approved of the theocratic and anti-national policy of Leo XIII., although he had shared in that spirit of opposition to pontifical intransigence that had been steadily increasing, although the condemnation of Rosminianism and of Americanism had caused him much suffering, nevertheless, in the spectacle of that profound synthesis of a life that is death, and at a moment when all passions are silenced, he saw the fundamental characteristics of Leo's pontificate in a light of intellectual grandeur and moral purity that rendered them worthy of his respect. He recalled especially the generous marks of approval that had been bestowed on all forms of culture; the determination to throw open the Vatican archives to the studious without fear of the revelations of history; the institution of the Bible Research Committee without fear of the criticism to which the Scriptures would be subjected; and it seemed to him that these determined efforts contained the beginning—unperceived, as yet, by the majority—of a great and inevitable future, of the admirable bursting forth of truth from the mortal embrace of confining bonds, of a slow transformation in the interpretation of dogma.

Meanwhile, Fogazzaro's gaze was anxiously fixed upon the future of the Church. There were several cardinals in the Sacred College whom he regarded with especial veneration. Capecelatro and Agliardi were of this number. He greatly hoped that Capecelatro would be elected, and that although his pontificate might be of short duration, he would at least have time to create a Sacred College composed of men distinguished for their learning and lofty virtues, for their spirituality and modern culture, men capable of grasping the trend of the times and of giving a new direction to the entire Catholic hierarchy. He believed that even without sweeping and immediate reforms, the liberal spirit of the Archbishop of Capua would suffice to bring about a renewal of purpose in the ecclesiastical institution; that in him there

¹ From *La Stampa*, July 22, 1903.

would finally be raised to supreme power one imbued with that desire for renewal which was of long standing in Italy, and which had been expressed, albeit not without acrimony, by the greatest Catholics of that generation as also by that school to which the Neapolitan cardinal himself belonged.

Had not Tommaseo—that great Italian and great believer—outlined the policy of renewal to be followed by a pope it was hoped the future would bring forth, and was not Capecelatro the heir to the spirit of Tommaseo even though, because of his position as a bishop, he was constrained to be more circumspect than the poet ?

“ Become a simple citizen again, and strive not for privileges of class, but for pure zeal and might of genius. Let discipline be simplified and become better adapted to the times. Let there be fewer ceremonies the better understood, and more strongly animated by the spirit of charity. . . . Let superfluous wealth be devoted to raising the standard of ecclesiastical learning rather than to the purchase of gilded carvings and of lamps and candles that burn by tens and twenties before an image, or to Masses celebrated by men who seek but emoluments. Let there be a new Catholic encyclopedia founded upon the genius of all, working together. . . . Let the pontifical power become a weapon for ecclesiastical freedom, that the strong may be held in check and the weak uplifted, that all may be united in harmonious repose. Let spiritual life be diffused throughout the whole body and not confined to the head alone, where it can but stagnate and become a source of danger. Let him (the future Pope) assume no other office than that of watching over the great Catholic body—an office, indeed, that is most noble and more than regal. Let no one oppress that body ; let not its movements be sluggish ; let beneficent truth push onward ever in the conquest of fresh knowledge. Let the good news be preached to all, which shall appear ever new in the light in which human genius, as it becomes more perfect, shall present it. Let provincial, national and general councils again be convoked, for the reprehensible departure from the practice of frequently convoking them is but a sign of our degeneracy. And in these councils let the members not discuss dogmas which have already been defined or which are undefinable, but rather practical means of perfecting divers things, the new means to be tried, those numerous means that the love of man and of God suggests to him whose faith is ardent. Let the Pope hold before his eyes

as an example, the new means of which, in the days of old, apostles, popes, bishops and wise men made use. Let him restore their original simplicity to certain institutions ; let him create others that are new, all being spiritual and in keeping with the ever-growing progress of the times ; and let him make use of them and control them. Let him attempt no reforms (reform is a hateful word and the thing itself more hateful still !), but rather a renewal from the inner conscience, an uninterrupted continuity and a daily recommencement of life. Innovation is of Catholicism, as he who observes closely will perceive. Error, on the contrary, is something that is always old, and heresy is a thing that is rancid. . . . Before the Christian religion arose and after the birth of those sects that lacerate it, human nature was able to accomplish great things only in proportion as it had strength to believe and hold together in faith. The anti-Catholic sects endure in proportion to what is Catholic in them ; and some things that are Catholic there were in the greatness of the Orient, of Egypt, of Etruria, of Greece and of republican Rome. Union in faith and in the ordering of what is human and of what is divine is a necessary condition if we would believe and understand great things ; and this is the germ . . . wherein are contained all human destinies.”¹

During the time the Conclave was in session Fogazzaro’s prayer was that the spirit of a truly Catholic renewal, which had remained in the Italian conscience as a leaven deposited therein by the generation of Manzoni, Rosmini and Gioberti, might descend upon him who should be called by the Almighty to assume the direction of the Church. He did not expect, indeed, that all of these hopes of liberal Catholicism would be realized were Capecelatro to be elected, but it would nevertheless be a great thing if they but escaped condemnation, if the supreme Pastor did but regard these aspirations with tolerance and favour, if the Pontiff’s acts were but calculated to facilitate this renovation of forms and of the ecclesiastical spirit, if thus gradually men were prepared who should be capable of facing the problems of an epoch as critical for the Church as that through which she had passed in the sixteenth century.

¹ Tommaseo, *Unpublished Pamphlets by Fra Girolamo Savonarola. (Concerning Italy.)* Dialogue II. : “Concerning the Church according to the Gospels.”

On August 4, 1903, however, Giuseppe Sarto came forth, as Pius x., from the Conclave that had elected him. The Cardinals had bestowed their votes upon the Patriarch of Venice as upon one enjoying a reputation for the greatest piety and purity in his sacerdotal life, as upon one, moreover, who had displayed a sense of tolerance in his practical dealings with the Italian monarchy. And on these points, indeed, they were not mistaken. Pius x. was above all else a good priest, whose life had been spent amidst the cares of the ministry. He was a simple, active and pious soul, used to personal contact with the people, used to preaching, shriving and almsgiving. Of very humble origin, he had preserved beneath the purple the simplicity of the admirable Venetian stock from which he sprang. He possessed the tastes of the Venetians, their astute kindness, that positive good sense that shrinks from indecision and all intellectual complications, that solid, precise and fervent faith which is a part of their daily lives and is sustained by good works rather than philosophical meditations. He had never been brought into contact either with the diplomatic or with the intellectual world. He was a man of action, an enemy to subtleties both in politics and in the realms of research ; his was a healthy, if somewhat rude nature ; his temperament was impulsive and autocratic, and he was more used to dealing with plain folk of his own region than with courtiers or the representatives of restless modern thought. On the other hand, he was thoroughly Italian in his sentiments. From his very infancy hatred of the Austrian rule had been in his blood, and this hatred alone would have sufficed to cause him to welcome the fact of Italian unity and to render him intolerant of any form of restoration—that of the temporal power included—which might in any way facilitate the return of the German to our land. Politically he was a clerical of the Venetian stamp, well disposed towards practical co-operation with the constitutional parties, personally not devoid of certain friendly feelings for the house of Savoy, and standing in great awe of the socialist hordes which, like the tribes of Attila, were advancing upon city and country alike and threatening to overthrow the old order. Pius x., therefore, stood at the very antipodes from Leo xiii., and this fact sufficed to secure him the approval of all who had suffered

from the long war Leo had waged against the unity and monarchy of Italy.

Fogazzaro, however, did not join in the general chorus of satisfaction. He held, indeed, that every historical event—and most especially the nomination of the visible head of the Church—has the value of a providential act in the inscrutable, divine logic. But at the same time he felt that, in the Church militant, not all that is religious life may be reassumed in the opinions and methods of the Pope ; that it is well that many other currents—if they be fully disciplined—should manifest themselves in the living organism of Catholicism, and that a certain pious opposition to church government is not only admissible, but often actually a blessing, as history shows, wherein is chronicled its unceasing action throughout the centuries.

In this respect, then, he realized from the very outset that he must belong to the party of opposition. To him Pius x. represented a current opposed to that wherein he had laboured and was still labouring for the Church, opposed to the current which, sooner or later he believed, would infuse new and vital energies into that great assimilative and co-ordinating body the Catholic Church. The renewal of all things in Christ which the new Pontiff had promised was, and had so appeared to him from the beginning, inspired by a static rather than by a dynamic conception of the Church ; it was a step backwards rather than an advance in the direction of the much longed for future regeneration.

Publicly he would not reveal his disappointment and forebodings, but he suffered from them in secret, and this all the more because his convictions were deep and sincere, and because authority and liberty were not to him merely two abstractions which it matters little whether we may or may not reconcile within us, but two vexatious and vital elements of the conscience. Several journalists requested him to express his opinion at this time, but he refused, alleging privately that “his opinion was not in harmony with the general chorus, and that it was one it would be unseemly for a Catholic to publish.”¹ To his friends, however, he wrote openly on the subject.

¹ Letter to T. G. S., August 14, 1903.

“ I had hoped for a pope who would raise the intellectual standard of the ecclesiastical hierarchy ; for one imbued with the modern spirit ; I had hoped for one who would make Bonomelli or at least Scalabrini a cardinal ; who would favour such men as Semeria and regard the followers of Rosmini with benevolence. These things seem to me of greater importance than the removal of the *non expedit*, insomuch as that is a political act ; but of Pius x. I expect none of them. I fear he will not even favour the *Opera di San Girolamo*. And as for the Bible Research Committee . . . ! A pope of this sort, a good man, filled with the spirit of his Venetian surroundings, who has always lived in Northern Italy, might well be so shamed and scandalized by the conditions of morality, of the cult and the clergy prevailing in the South, as to be induced to undertake a crusade for the purifying of those regions. But will Pius have the strength to accomplish this ? Meanwhile it appears that Callegari is on the list of the first cardinals to be appointed. Bonomelli or Scalabrini, indeed . . . ! We are at the very antipodes from them ! Ah, how glad I should be to find myself mistaken in my forebodings ! With what joy would I recite the *Confiteor* if the purple should after all be more fittingly distributed ! It is my opinion that those who will be best satisfied with the new Pope are Zanardelli and his adherents, and, outside of the field of politics, all of those unbelievers who look askance upon an enlightened Catholicism because it is harder to combat. If you think I am mistaken it will be a great comfort to me if you will write and tell me so.”¹

Fogazzaro, indeed, was not mistaken with regard to the reactionary character the new pontificate was destined to assume, and it is undoubtedly a fact that, in shaping the trend of the book he was writing, he was strongly influenced by that predominating characteristic of the Vatican policy. The book became the refuge, as it were, for all those aspirations that had been frustrated in reality ; the expression of a current of mystic renovation that must inevitably clash with the rigid theological defences Pius x. had set up as the bulwarks of his kingdom.

It was not the first time that a pope and a Catholic poet had confronted each other, each speaking a different language ; and again it was decreed by fate that they should fail to understand each other, although each was honestly obeying the dictates

¹ Letter from A. Fogazzaro to A. Giacomelli, August, 1903.

of his own conscience, each working with the sole purpose of promoting the triumph of what is right. Had they met on some path among their native hills, the good priest Don Giuseppe Sarto and the good Catholic Antonio Fogazzaro, speaking in all probability the dialect of their region, might indeed have found themselves less widely separated ; they might perhaps have discovered that they shared a common and great anxiety concerning certain religious questions, and that they both detested the "Regal Vatican" with its pomps, its deceit, its diplomatic subtleties, with all that dust arising from things that are dead through which God's Church looms grey. While differing in their philosophy they might well have felt, when heart spoke to heart, a common longing that holiness might rejuvenate from the very roots that venerable tree, born, as the mustard seed, from the word of Christ. But upon the paths of history where each one pursues his own mission, in that region wherein we are all strangers, wherein each, according to his mission, his nature or his talents, represents a different side of this polyhedral humanity, so varied and rich in contradictions, the Supreme Pontiff and the author of *The Saint* were destined never to meet, never to understand each other. Their joint names will pass into history as embodying in a way the contest that raged within the Church between the theological tradition and the perpetual aspirations towards spiritual renewal, towards the inner rejuvenescence of the ecclesiastical institution ; a conflict that was born of the very faith in the Church cherished by the opponent himself. For no historian can honestly affirm that Fogazzaro's opposition to the rule of Pius x. was the result of an enfeebled faith in the authority of the Church of Rome herself.

Antonio Fogazzaro's very harshness was born of love. He believed most fervently that the Church was a living body, that the Spirit was still working within her, and in the supreme authority he saw a lofty summit whereon a shining light may still be set, a torch of annunciation illumining the darkness.

One of the new pontiff's first acts was calculated to demonstrate his precise intentions. He opened the campaign against modernism by condemning Abbé Loisy's book. There had been much discussion concerning this ecclesiastic during the latter part

of Leo's pontificate, after the publication of *L'Évangile et l'Église*—one of the books that best illustrates the religious crisis of our times—wherein the learned exegetist outlined the new school of apologetics as opposed to Harnack's Protestant criticism. Loisy had made a most daring attempt to explain Christian development in the light of a new religious philosophy. The French bishops had taken alarm at its boldness and had appealed to Rome to condemn the work which they themselves had immediately forbidden in their diocese. But Leo XIII. had refused to sign the decree. Standing on the threshold of death he had perhaps feared to deal a blow through this book of Loisy's at those very rights of criticism he had established the Bible Research Committee to protect. He feared perhaps to compromise the Church by acting without due reflection, or it may have been that the book by the young French priest had given him matter for much thought.

Be this as it may, the nomination of the new Pope brought a radical change. Pius X. was averse to subtle reasonings. In no one of his acts did any sense of opportuneness cause him to hesitate. Loisy, moreover, had been at the pains of further explaining his views in *Autour d'un petit livre*, wherein he had still more strongly emphasized his detachment from the letter of dogma which he was willing to accept indeed, but only if he might give it a symbolic interpretation.¹ On December 16, 1903, a decree issued by the Holy Office placed five of his works on the Index. The interest Antonio Fogazzaro took in these events was more impassioned than was generally supposed. *L'Évangile et l'Église* had strongly influenced him. Above all else he had seen in it the effort of the new school of apologetics against Protestant criticism. As early, in fact, as December 1902 he had written in the following terms to a friend whom he was in the habit of keeping informed concerning what he read :

“ I now have on hand two books by Abbé Loisy : *L'Évangile et l'Église* is a confutation of Harnack, which strongly appeals to me, because Harnack, with his depurated Christianity (*Das Wesen des Christenthums*), seems to me to have led many astray.”²

¹ V. G. Houtin, *Histoire du Modernisme Catholique*, 1913, p. 26.

² Letter from A. Fogazzaro to the Countess Carolina Colleoni-Giustiniani-Bandini, December, 1902.

He felt that this book constituted a powerful means of defence against the fever of criticism, be it the result of external influences or of secret workings in the consciences of many Catholics of his day. It was, therefore, precisely on the point that caused him the greatest anxiety that the blow fell when, towards the end of the year 1903, it began to be insistently rumoured that Loisy would be condemned. By means of his letters we will let Fogazzaro tell us, in all honesty, exactly what his views and sentiments were, and how great was his anxiety during that period of conflict and suspense.

VICENZA, November 16, 1903.—I have read Loisy's *Autour d'un petit livre*. Sabatier wrote to me about it, evidently hoping I might be able to do something to prevent the book from being placed on the Index. What a mistake! It will most certainly be placed on the Index, and I imagine *L'Évangile et l'Église* will share the same fate. The book is powerful and enlightening, but I wish Loisy had written it in Latin.

(Letter to T. G. S.)

VICENZA, November 19, 1903.—Yesterday I had N—— to dine with me and learned from him of the Bonomelli letter in opposition to Loisy. He told me the letter had made a deep impression even in Father Genocchi's circle, where they agree with Bonomelli. I am grieved, twice, thrice grieved by all this! I was already convinced that Bonomelli, should he be driven to declare his position, would do so in this way. I know him well. But when I say I know him I by no means intend to imply any censure. For him, a bishop (apart from his own opinions in the matter, which I know are not very advanced), to have assumed an attitude antagonistic to that of the French bishops would have been a grave step. But what need had he of declaring his views at all?

(Letter to T. G. S.)

VICENZA, December 6, 1903.

MONSIGNORE AND REVERED FRIEND,— . . . I am aware that you have published an article on Loisy's last book and I regret that I have as yet been unable to read it. I am told that it is a stern article, but composed, nevertheless, in the charitable spirit that never fails to inspire you. As *L'Évangile et l'Église*, although condemned in France, has thus far escaped censure at Rome, I

should have advised Loisy to remain silent, to be satisfied with having achieved so much, and not to endanger his first book by publishing a second. If he must indeed write, I should have urged him to do so in Latin. Having made this declaration, I must confess to you, Monsignore, that I believe in the future success (which may perhaps be very remote) of Loisy's views concerning the inspiration of Holy Writ and the interpretation of dogma. He is too far beyond his times; the time for that ideal sowing is not yet. But what lucidity of conception and of interpretation he possesses! Poor Loisy, how dearly he is having to pay for remaining faithful to Truth, or I should rather say, to what he believes is Truth!

(Letter to Monsignor G. Bonomelli.)

ROME, December 14, 1903.—I send you what information I have gathered. Richard and Turinaz have moved heaven and earth to obtain the condemnation. The Pope has promised that the Holy See will "do something" in the matter. Influential persons hope that the formal condemnation will not be pronounced, and that the *something* will be but a manifestation of the views held by the Holy See to serve as a guide and restraining admonition to those who may wish to venture too far. The Bishop of Alby, a friend of Loisy, had an audience of the Pope yesterday, which lasted a long time. My informant saw the bishop come out looking anything but happy. Those who are working at the Vatican to prevent the condemnation consider that the intervention of the liberal Press would be inopportune. . . .

"I both admire and love Loisy, in so far as it is possible to love a person one has never seen, but with whom one has much in common. There is, however, one thing I set before even Loisy himself, and that is his *religious conception*. To me it is this before all else that must be saved. To achieve this and should it become necessary, I believe one should even sacrifice the personal sentiment for the man who has revealed such a conception. Painful necessity obliges me to abandon the cause of the *man* in order to support that of the *idea*. Let the Vatican deal with the man as it will, no matter how much suffering its sentence may cause us. We support his ideas, treating them as impersonal, freeing them from the ties that bind them to their author and that constitute a grave danger for them. I am fully convinced that should Loisy be condemned, he would wish his

friends to assume this attitude, for he himself sets his ideas before his person.

(Letter to T. G. S.)

VICENZA, December 22, 1903.

MONSIGNORE AND REVERED FRIEND,—I thank you for having sent me the article on Loisy. I am aware that, coming from me, any adverse judgment of your opinions may appear bold and presumptuous. But if such sentiments will not be silenced in my heart, and if I confess them in all humility to a father, a physician of souls, . . . will you not be indulgent with me? You speak of arrogant and intemperate criticism, of hypotheses given as theses. One may not discuss the justice of this criticism, but such is not true criticism. True criticism is that which is reasonable and wise; that of which you speak, which has indeed already established certain truths that clash with tradition, and may establish others, concerning the authenticity of the Scriptures, the dates of their composition, their authors, the historical exactness of events related. This form of criticism is justified in demanding that its conclusions be recognized, for they possess all the outer attributes of certainty, and it has the right also to subject everything to examination. It would be futile to set up a *credo* against its *certainty*. Its conclusions must either be routed upon scientific ground, or accepted. Loisy accepts them, it seems to me (those at least which he deems *certainities*), with faith that they will leave intact that Catholic truth whose essence is immutable, but whose formulas, always inadequate, are mutable. His attitude towards Bible criticism is that of a Catholic apologist to whom the Bible is not, as it is to the Protestant, the sole source of authority; to whom the Bible is a prop for the authority of the Church. And the Church derives her authority directly from Christ risen from the dead, Who works within her.

Loisy admits the Resurrection not because it is a firmly authenticated historical fact, but because of his faith in the testimony of the New Testament, and in the authority of the Church. *For him* the Resurrection is an historical certainty, but he would not be able to provide absolute and unassailable proof of it to the unbeliever who rejects the testimony of the Apostles and of Christians in general, who demands the testimony of such as were not Christians, as we have it for the Crucifixion. His is meritorious faith—*beati qui non viderunt et crederunt*. His is the faith that is necessary in order to be saved, according

to the Epistle to the Romans. But tell me, Monsignore, if we possessed the most positive proofs of the Resurrection, what merit would there be in believing, and what reasonable man would then refuse to believe in Christ? The other day, in Rome, Baron K., who agreed with me in deeming the publication of Loisy's book a mistake, said that personally he had derived much benefit from it. Remember it was one connected with the Vatican who made this admission, a man, moreover, of superior intelligence and culture. There are many who feel the same. It is true the danger of going too far does really exist and it is always wise for you, our shepherds, to preach prudence. An admonition to Loisy, coming from Rome, would do no harm, but believe me, a condemnation would have a disastrous effect on many souls. At Rome the optimists hope there will be only the admonition. The matter will be decided soon after the Epiphany, I understand. The purity of his most exemplary life will be in Loisy's favour, for Pius x. esteems this form of virtue most highly.

(Letter to Monsignor G. Bonomelli.)

VICENZA, December 26, 1903.—As soon as I had read to-day's *Corriére* I wrote off the following letter to Loisy. I wish you to see it also, as it confirms my views in this matter. I should be obliged if you would make a copy of it and save me the time and trouble, for you can imagine how much writing I have to do at present. My heart is bitter and keeps repeating the verses: *Per zelo d'una verità divina, negata è la divina verità.* (Through zeal for truth divine, Divine truth is now denied.)

But I am still convinced that we must support ideas and leave individuals to their fate. . . .

(Letter to Loisy. Translated from the French.)

MONSIEUR,—Your books have been condemned. I presume and hope that you will not refuse to perform an act of outward submission. That is all your ecclesiastical superiors have the right to expect of you. Some Italian Catholics who admire and love you, desire to say to you, through me, that it is their firm conviction that the day will come whereon, by the power of facts, your theses will be accepted by that Catholicism of the future, *at once positive and mystical*, which we are labouring to prepare, each in his own field. You surely cannot desire that we should rise up against the decree that has condemned you, for you

yourself have at heart not the achievement of personal satisfaction which might endanger their triumph, but the success of the ideas you hold. These ideas that you have served so nobly are very vital and will not perish. They have their faithful servants in almost every region, and we are of the number of these. Although we do not feel it would be wise to take your name for our battle-cry, we nevertheless give it a high place among the names of those who are most dear to us as Christians and Catholics. I take pleasure in assuring you of this at this hour of bitterness when, after a battle won against Protestant rationalism, you are beaten down by the high officials of the Church you have defended.

ANTONIO FOGAZZARO.

VICENZA, January 3, 1904.—I have just received this reply from Loisy.

“ I am infinitely touched and honoured by your expressions of sympathy. I knew that you had read my books, and that you did not disapprove of them, and this gave me much satisfaction. The present moment looks dark indeed. Like you, I cherish the hope that beneath what has appeared a tissue of error there lie the germs of living truth, which will grow and bear fruit in due season.” (From the French.)

As you see, the letter contains not a word concerning submission. Bonomelli has sent me a letter teeming with his heart’s kindness, but we differ on the main point. At bottom it may be but a question of words.

(Letter to T. G. S.)

VICENZA, January 12, 1904.—I wrote to Loisy after the condemnation. He replied by a few lines that testify to his composure and moderation. To-day Baron von Hügel sends me from London an article on the condemnation that is also very temperate. It alludes to many other condemnations that were eventually revoked, beginning with the prohibition of Aristotle, but it goes on to assume that this latest sentence pronounced by the Holy Office will protect many consciences that were unprepared for such works. The author declares that he holds the proofs of much good that Loisy has done to souls outside the Church. A more impassioned article in Loisy’s defence has appeared in the *Annales de philosophie chrétienne*. Its anonymous author asserts that it was composed before the condemnation, but as a matter of fact it appeared afterwards.

I am reading *L'Americanisme* by Houtin, which is as pleasing as everything he writes. How widely that world and that Catholicism differ from ours ! Over there they are not greatly concerned with Bible criticism, nor with dogma in general. They accept the forms of the Catholic faith without stopping to examine them too closely. What most concerns them is the question of works.

(Letter to Monsignor Geremia Bonomelli.)

These letters honestly disclose the spirit in which Fogazzaro bore his part in the events that had sprung from Bible criticism at that moment of extreme agitation in the history of the Church. The fervour with which he followed Loisy was but a sign of the fervour with which he pursued his own unremitting search for truth. Without being a critic, he fully realized the importance of the battle that was being fought in the bosom of the Church, between Catholic tradition and the new school of apologetics, between theology and science. As one of the faithful he had foreseen that this struggle must not only interest critics, but all who realized that in these discussions concerning the historical foundations of the faith were involved the supreme interests of our spiritual life, and indirectly also those of Christian civilization. To touch the figure of Christ and the origins of Christianity was, in a way, to touch the roots of the world in which we live. The same love of Truth that had made him cry : *Verità, verità, vita del cuore ; Verità, verità, cuor della vita !* (Truth, truth, life of the heart ; Truth, truth, the heart of life !), and that had urged him to undertake a closer examination of the rational foundations of faith in God, now also forced him to face boldly and honestly the results of historical criticism, and to re-examine in their light the foundations of his own Christian life.

Darwin had led him from a narrow conception of God's action in the physical order to a vaster conception of the universe and of unceasing, creative activity ; Loisy had led him, albeit through much spiritual tribulation, from a baser conception of the inspiration of Holy Writ to what seemed to him the true Catholic conception of the perennial activity of Christ in His Church ; Loisy had led him to that theory of Newman's concerning the development of dogma, that appeared to him to

respond better than any other to God's manner of operating in the spiritual order. For this reason he regarded Loisy as a great Catholic apologist; as one of those who are destined to leave a lasting trace in the history of the Church. He saw but one side of Loisy—that which was opposed to Protestant rationalism. He believed that this small, pale, delicate and invalid priest, shut up with his books in the solitude of Bellevue, possessed the power, by means of his works of criticism alone, of raising Catholicism above the reform, and this in a manner entirely unforeseen. In fact, although to treat the Gospels in the spirit of the philologist, to consider them merely as writings which may be subjected to critical discussion, might lead to results contrary to the generally accepted opinions concerning the historical value of Holy Writ, these results endangered only such faith as was founded on the *book* alone. Now in the case of Protestantism, for which the Bible is the direct law, the one source of doctrine, criticism applied to the inspired texts constituted an irreparable offence, a blow destined to shake the very foundations of the entire Christian edifice and one which must inevitably drive it to anti-religious rationalism. On the other hand, Loisy undertook to demonstrate (and herein lay his originality as an apologist) that even the most radical criticism to which the rationalists had subjected the Gospels and which must either be accepted or countered on scientific grounds, could not touch the foundations of Catholicism insomuch as, to the Catholic, the Bible is an auxiliary, a text-book for the Church, which being alone infallible, is the organ of the Holy Spirit. The Church is not the slave of the letter. She makes the book serve her. She interprets it, and the book is of value because she interprets it according to the spirit of Christ that lives in her, according to her authority and tradition, which are not dependent upon historical documents alone for support, but are derived directly from Christ Himself.

Thus did Loisy's system of criticism practically resolve itself into mysticism, into a faith in the immanent action of Christ in His Church and in the indefinite and vital development of the germs which the Saviour had implanted in His first followers. It was in this mysticism that Fogazzaro's conscience had again

found that peace which pure criticism had disturbed. Loisy had shown him that in Catholicism, he might feel that he was resting upon an unassailable foundation.

The spiritual union between Fogazzaro and Loisy, however, was destined to be of short duration. Loisy was not a mystic although he made use of the mysticism of Newman and of the philosophers of the school of immanence to introduce the results of his critical researches into the Catholic Church, and, in all good faith, to justify his position to himself. It was with pain and astonishment that Fogazzaro watched the slow shrivelling of the man in whom he had placed his hopes as in a new Father of the Church. The great apologist who had proclaimed the perennial vitality of Catholicism, became more and more estranged from the faith in which he had participated, concentrating his powers ever more exclusively upon the critical analysis of the Scriptures, which he subjected to examination carried out in the keen spirit of asperity and acrimony that revealed him as hostile, as dissecting not a living thing, but something he believed to be dead for all eternity. Cold and cynical, subject to no impulses of indignation or of open revolt, displaying in his actions the circumspection of the diplomatist rather than the impulsive rashness of the apostle, he who had fought against Protestant rationalism, was slowly dying to himself, was being gradually congealed by a dissolving intellectualism. The priest became a professor and the exegetist no longer found Christ in the Gospels, he who had proclaimed Him alive in the Church. Like the disciples at Emmaus, after but three short days, he failed to recognize his Lord.

Fogazzaro's mystical nature rebelled against pure criticism. Nevertheless this rebellion never signified denial of what he had felt to be true in Loisy's works. It would be a mistake to assume that this sad experience led him to deny, in the name of his faith, the results of Bible criticism and the conclusions to which it had led. He continued to maintain the historian's right to examine Holy Writ with the same freedom with which he would examine any other book, for there cannot be two forms of criticism any more than there can be two forms of logic. He continued to believe that this criticism alone would lead to successful results against rationalism, and establish what Christ had really said and

done "in such a manner as to bring conviction," to quote von Hügel, "that it is not irrational to believe Him on His word." He also continued to hold that the results of that criticism might modify the basis of future apologetic theology in such a manner as to bring us ever nearer to the figure of Christ, to shed an ever stronger light upon the human side of His nature, to make us feel the "true man" in Him, and consequently bring home to us His real part in this troubled existence of ours.

On the other hand, however, Fogazzaro realized that criticism of this description threatened to become resolved into phenomenology, which must corrupt any religion if it be not always accompanied by a close communion with the spirit of the Church, if it be not guided by the *sensus Christi* of the great mystics, and by a faith capable of grasping (the fragmentary nature of phenomena and the contradictions contained in the texts notwithstanding) the living and enduring Reality of the risen Christ. He realized that placing the critic on one side and the believer on the other, that separating by artificial means the demands of sentiment and those of reason must inevitably lead to victory for each with reciprocal exclusion, did man not seek at all times to regain that inner harmony which serves not to deceive others but to strengthen his own conscience and banish his own doubts. He realized that the attitude of the churchman who affirms what he denies, believes what he demolishes, worships on one hand and smiles sadly on the other, is both indefensible and dishonest unless a profound sentiment of mysticism, a sentiment that is true and unsophisticated, succeed each day in overcoming these contradictions, in causing all apparent antinomy to revert to one profound unity, to the central fire, to the original intuition. Let the historian study Holy Writ with that honesty of purpose which knows no fear ; let him study and analyse without constraint and in all sincerity ; but as he is a believer let him not lose the inner contact with that right which comes not from texts, with that life which is not derived from exegesis. Let him be a critic among critics ; but having completed his search for truth according to the methods of science, let him also, like the beloved disciple, lay his weary head upon the breast of his Invisible Master and pray silently : "Now tell Thou

me whom Thou art ; now speak Thou to me the words of eternal life that are truly Thine."

Such was Fogazzaro's position with regard to Loisy while Loisy was shrinking away from Christianity and from himself. Fogazzaro was greatly helped at this time by Father George Tyrrell, whose works he read and whose spiritual nature he came to know so well during the period of preparation for the writing of *The Saint*. That book, in fact, contains many indications of its author's familiarity with Tyrrell's works.

Born in Dublin in 1861, Tyrrell became a convert to Catholicism in 1879 and entered the Company of Jesus in 1880. When Fogazzaro began to correspond with him he still belonged to the Order, but beneath the Jesuit's robe Fogazzaro divined the existence of one of the most liberal of religious spirits, one of the most impassioned awakeners of consciences. While Loisy possessed the temperament of the rationalist and made use of mysticism only in his attempt to establish a new school of apologetics for the purpose of introducing into the Church the results obtained by science, Tyrrell possessed the temperament of the mystic, recognizing criticism indeed, but only to merge it entirely in the science of God, and with but one dominating aim, that of the uplifting of souls within the Church. He wished the Church to be an association of living souls, a communing of consciences reawakened to the life of Christ. He fully appreciated the value of outward social ties—of the symbolical liturgy and of the historical tradition; but these elements must serve souls, must not be served by them. To him the Church was as a great raft whose mission it is to transport from one shore to the other, from time to eternity, but it must transport men, men who are free although voluntarily submitting to the law they have freely accepted ; they must be neither slaves, inanimate bodies nor puppets. An aura of high religious thought and of passion for the divine encompassed all of Tyrrell's activities, an aura wherein flamed the scorching fire of his convictions, an aura that contained a virile determination of purpose and the spirit of a great reformer, or rather of one who desired, at all costs, to see the Church become ever more capable of responding to those needs of the spirit which may change their shape but in substance remain ever the same.

In him Fogazzaro felt the existence of a new leader of souls. He foresaw that Tyrrell would leave a deep impress upon his times, that he was of the stuff of those who place an indelible mark upon the religious life of a century. Above all else he felt his nearness to himself in their joint predominating anxiety concerning the Catholic life, and he made the English mystic the inspirer and master of him whom he was about to send forth into the world as the Saint.

Thus, during this time of preparation, Fogazzaro was obeying conflicting demands of his spirit. On one hand he sought for truth with the critic, on the other, with the mystic ; he was tortured by an inner crisis of doubt, and rejoiced to be able to overcome it by means of the evermore impassioned fervour of the believer ; he was troubled, and once more found peace in the simple dedication of self to God. These contrasts, these revulsions of his personal sentiment, these attempts and indecisions can have appeared in the light of religious dilettantism only to those who were not living the difficult and complex life of Catholicism. To pure logicians as to idealists this contrast must indeed have seemed almost to imply moral and intellectual inferiority, for they held that one must make up one's mind to deny either science or faith ; one must be either a mystic or a rationalist ; that one must accept one or other of the solutions and renounce ambiguity. But now that passions have had time to cool, it may perhaps be more clearly seen that what appeared to be indecision or illogicalness was but the drama through which must pass whosoever seeks to reaffirm in himself that Catholic faith which has been transmitted to him indeed, but which has enemies to face on all sides ; it was but the inevitable feverishness of one born in the Church during one of the most trying periods in her history, and who wished to dwell always in her, not in part only, not for conventional reasons nor by means of external acts of adhesion, but with his whole being, his reason and sentiment, his body and his soul. Catholicism will always prove an inward tragedy to him who desires to live thus in the Church, for Catholicism is not a simple solution which may satisfy, in a manner that is unilateral, one or other of the demands of human nature, and that promises to resolve every difficulty

by means either of reason or of sentiment ; it is a life that must embrace all things, that can exclude nothing without incurring the risk of degenerating into a school of philosophy or a superstition. Therefore, the Catholic who truly lives to the spirit of his faith can never be other than a cruelly tortured being, one who each day re-achieves a higher degree of harmony through the reconciliation of the conflicting demands of his nature ; who rises superior to a conflict which is ever bursting forth afresh in the deepest recesses of his soul, but which he can never definitely suppress. It is in this torment that the beauty and grandeur of Catholicism reside ; it is this promise of suffering which contains the eternal fascination Catholicism exerts over those natures that are most impassioned and most incapable of contenting themselves with a shallow answer to the terrible complexity of the questions of life.

Antonio Fogazzaro was of the number of those who live and love Catholicism in its complexity, as a strenuous daily victory. What on the surface might appear to be unrest, was really the affirmation within him of contrasting values all of which were necessary to his life. He was not of those to whom the Church is as Mount Tabor whereon it would be sweet to rest within the tabernacle and worship ; he was of those to whom she is the eternal Golgotha whereon man must suffer in order to become something more than man. In von Hügel's poetical language, he had realized that the only sacred image that could symbolize the typical life of a Catholic of our times, was the Crucifix—man bound to hard and bitter reality, his arms widespread as if to embrace all things, to comprehend all things, but nailed fast on either side ; man engaged in the supreme contest between the warring demands of his spirit, a contest he has undertaken in full consciousness and fervour of faith ; man with a crown of thorns upon his head which is nevertheless turned towards the high Mystery. To live in Catholicism it had been necessary for him to crucify himself thus, to accept this torturing dualism, this passion of the spirit to feel, in his living flesh, these lacerating points of all the problems of the present hour—points as terrible as the nails and thorns ; to suffer ever more keenly from the difficulties within him rather than hide them from himself. He

had undertaken to fight the obscure inner battle of him who understands the meaning of all the problems which from every side crowd in and press upon us, and of him who desires at all costs to attempt to re-establish within himself that harmonious unity which has been disturbed and shattered by the revolution of thought and sentiment through which we have all passed, from which we have all suffered—all of us at least who are not deaf and blind to the agony of our century. It was not dilettantism then, in *Fogazzaro*, but tragedy, the honest searching, painful straining to re-establish an inner and vital equilibrium between the conflicting needs by which he was rent; the equilibrium between faith and science, mysticism and reason, liberty and authority, tradition and criticism, the individual and religious society, the clergy and the laity, the Church and the State. *The Saint* was to be the fruit of this suffering; would bear its stigmata, and, apart from its artistic worth the book was destined to become a document testifying to a crisis in the Church in that hour of preparation.

CHAPTER XVII

THE SAINT

HENCEFORTH Fogazzaro was completely absorbed in his novel. This work was to "place the crown" on his literary labours, was to be his "last and fiercest battle, waged in the cause of that orthodox religious renewal which is not only of supreme necessity, but is already in course of accomplishment." He desired to avoid attributing undue importance to his novel. "When I call it a battle," he wrote, "it is with no intention of magnifying my work. It is indeed quite possible that the world will pass it by unnoticed, but to my insignificant self it will ever remain a great matter."¹ It was a question of raising that "cross" which was to bring his literary labours to a close, and of which he had begun to speak soon after the death of his son. But only now did he really grasp the extent of the difficulties to be overcome. The greatest of these lay in "making a being who is morally superior to the writer himself, speak and act. Were he intellectually superior the thing would be impossible; of this we have sufficient proof in the innumerable unsuccessful attempts of ambitious writers. If he be but morally superior the thing is no longer impossible, but, nevertheless, extremely difficult. It is one thing to entertain a clear conception of the sanctity of the ideas one wishes to see advanced for the good of the Church, but quite another to put them into the mouth of a saint, who, moreover, ceases to be such if he reveal his belief in his own sainthood."²

Fogazzaro was, however, sustained and stimulated as at no other epoch in his life, by the conviction that he was accomplishing what was practically a mission. The mysterious personage lived within him, formed, indeed, a necessity of his conscience.

¹ Letter from Fogazzaro to Countess Colleoni-Giustiniani, November, 1902.

² Letter to T. G. S., Vicenza, June 3, 1904.

Little by little the work of his imagination had become, as was frequently the case with him, a reality that dominated him, to which he subjected his whole life, which he obeyed, which controlled his actions. He was completely merged in what he was writing. To a friend he wrote : " I am working on my *Saint*, and I continue to vibrate to what I have written even when I am in the company of others." ¹ / The book came from the depths of his soul ; it embodied the aspirations of his whole life ; it was the synthesis of all his religious experiences. Even the most remote memories of his childhood were involved in it ; those most inspired examples of Christian virtue whom he had met upon life's way, those leanings towards reform which his nearest and dearest had entertained, which had amounted almost to a family tradition, figured in it : Don Giuseppe's spiritual attitude—that of the Rosminian—the spiritual attitude of Suor Maria Innocente—that of the dolorous soul yearning to see the Church freed from her " crutches." / But above all else the book contained the anxiety of recent years, the suppressed rebellion against ecclesiasticism, against Phariseism, against the policy of the Vatican ; it threw much light upon the inner struggle between the opposite currents that existed in the Church. /

It was at this time that Fogazzaro applied for an audience of the Pope, but Pius x.'s personal distrust of him caused his appeal to be rejected. This refusal notwithstanding, however, he consoled himself with the thought that his *Saint* would reach the Pontiff without need of Monsignor Bisleti's sanction. His *Saint* would pass through the portals of bronze unchallenged by the Swiss Guard, would be guided by an unseen spirit up secret stairways and through the marvellous labyrinth of the Sacred Palaces into the presence of the Vicar of Christ.

/ In Benedetto, Fogazzaro aimed at creating a figure of the first magnitude, a mystic revealer of the Almighty, a man capable of bringing about a great reform in the Church in this century. / Was he successful in his attempt ?

We owe it to his memory to be perfectly frank. It seems to us that in order to make of Benedetto a great, outstanding figure, one of those who take their place among the creations

¹ Letter to T. G. S., Vicenza, January 10, 1905.

whose eternal humanity enables them to defy time, Fogazzaro lacked the Michael Angelesque power of moulding heroes. He sought to outstrip his own experience, to transcend the sphere of passions that had filled his being, to scale the heights around which the divine tempest rages ; but in reality his success as an artist was less than when his inspiration had been contained within narrower limits, than when he had created, not masters, but brothers of his own dolorous spirit. His daring did not enable him to impress upon his hero's brow the sign of immortality, perhaps because of the existence of insurmountable difficulties of which he was not fully conscious.

One such difficulty, in my opinion, lay at the very root of Benedetto's psychology—in his nature and character. This was the fact that he was Piero Maironi. Piero Maironi was too weak, too morbidly sensual ever to become a power, ever to develop a manly, unfaltering will. The figure of a truly great man could not be hewn from material so plastic. To create the image of a saint Fogazzaro should have detached it completely from that of Jeanne Dessalle's lover. He had failed to observe that the saints were, above all else, great men, of the same essence as that of the greatest geniuses, poets, philosophers and heroes ; that, if they had been sinners, they had been great in sin as in repentance ; that as men they had been wholly evil and wholly good. Such beings never faltered, never belied their true temperaments because they were the embodiment of strong, undeviating wills. They could be as intense in unchastity as in purity. They were either libertines or ascetics ; they were made for heaven or for hell. In choosing a man of Piero Maironi's stamp for transformation into a Benedetto, Fogazzaro was not only acting in defiance of what history teaches, but was, at the same time, binding himself as an artist to obey the laws that controlled the unstable and placid nature of one to whom salvation had come through external circumstances—almost by chance ; of one whose own volition had had no part in checking the course of a sin that had not been committed. This weakness of character constituted an original flaw which no artist, however skilful, could possibly remove from the individual out of whom the Saint was to be evolved. And it is precisely this weakness that blurs Bene-

detto's figure as an apostle, that renders his position as a combatant uncertain. In certain respects he remains an undefinable being, "neither of the world nor outside of it," as the abbot, Father Omobono Ravasio, describes him; he remains the mystic who loves the dim light, the garden, the habit of the Benedictine monastery, which, however, he does not enter; the dreamer who lacks the courage simply to remain a layman and forgo the serving-brother's garb, or to become a friar. Like Piero Maironi at Praglia, he feels the aesthetic attraction of monasticism, but is never filled with its spirit, never subjects himself to its rule. Like Piero Maironi again, he is incapable of adapting himself to any definite form of discipline, incapable of accomplishing any task that is virile, circumscribed, concrete. He is the restless spirit whose aspirations soar towards a great civil and religious renewal, but who does not realize that a fulerum is essential to leverage, does not know how to choose a modest point of resistance whereon to concentrate his every endeavour. Even after purification his temperament remains that of Jeanne Dessalle's ambiguous friend; it is neither sufficiently active nor sufficiently contemplative; it is still at the mercy of circumstances it is incapable of dominating.

For all of these reasons Benedetto really lives only when his poet describes him to us as engaged in those inner struggles wherein the fundamental dualism of Fogazzaro's personage is most clearly defined, and the new man most easily superimposed upon the old. Thus in the description of the night spent upon the rock-strewn hillside, he stands forth in all the tragic grandeur of one beset by sore temptation; he is still Piero Maironi indeed, but caught up into the sphere of purer, more spiritual passions. This is a grand page because in it Fogazzaro has not striven to transform the sinful Maironi into the poor repentant Benedetto. In this man, lying prostrate upon the bare earth, scourged by the rain and feeling in his flesh as in his soul the presence of the spirits of evil, there is the frank avowal of all those passions, of that sensualism, of that frenzy of introspection which were essentially characteristic of Fogazzaro himself. It is not the Saint of his imagination, but the man himself who is undergoing this struggle. But when the battle ceases to be of the senses and of doubt, and

becomes a battle for ideals, then the fundamental incapacity to act of a nature such as this becomes clearly apparent, and the author finds himself unable to overcome the basic difficulty which resides in the fact that he has exacted too much of Piero Maironi in attempting to make of this lover of Jeanne Dessalle a director of souls.

Another heritage from *The Man of the World*, moreover, weighs heavily upon *The Saint* and disturbs the spontaneity and humanity of the work ; it is that unexpected intervention of the supernatural as represented by the vision which, in a manner more or less vague, pervades the book, although artistically its presence is unjustifiable. We can readily comprehend why Fogazzaro introduced this element of the marvellous, but as it fails to add anything to the structure of the work, it can serve in reality but to strengthen our doubts and misgivings concerning Benedetto's hypersensitive, almost morbid nature. The marvellous stirs the emotions only when it is experienced in a manner devoid of sophistication and with whole-hearted faith. Here, on the contrary, it is introduced in a form that is ambiguous, that leaves us in doubt as to whether, to the author, this element was an inner certainty or a literary expedient ; whether to him it was a light from on high or the result of psychical emotion. Benedetto himself seems to us to have been weakened rather than strengthened by that vision, the authenticity of which he neither trusts implicitly nor entirely repudiates.

Benedetto lacked two attributes which were indispensable if his sainthood was to be firmly established in a work of art, namely, that virile nature, granitic in its strength to withstand all those elements of femininity that are peculiar to a form of piety not yet freed from the domination of the senses, and an hour of true inner revelation, of complete illumination, of perfect fusion with the God of Truth, the hour of Sinai, the hour of Damascus, whence the spirit emerges as had it beheld a new world, and with the inner certainty that it has indeed been in contact not with vague and wavering images, but with living Reality.

Nevertheless, in spite of all, the book possesses a suggestive power to stir the emotions which defies that mass of adverse and purely literary criticism to which it was subjected on its appear-

ance. The numerous unfavourable, unjust and scathing judgments that have been pronounced against it notwithstanding, but few contemporary works in our literature have been so widely discussed and read and have carried the fame of an Italian writer so far ; but few retain their place in the history of European literature as does this. It is because the book is something more than a mere novel ; it is an affirmation of principles. Benedetto was the messenger of a spiritual movement that was as yet nameless ; he was the mouth-piece of a great longing, of an anguish that lay deep in the hearts of many in different parts of the world who were strangers to each other, and to whom the sudden call came as an unexpected summons. What stirred the emotions was the accent of faith that breathed from every page of the book, was Antonio Fogazzaro's own firm conviction underlying the web of romance, his hidden determination to make his art serve an idea.

Its enemies were therefore justified in regarding *The Saint* rather as a programme of Catholic reform than as a mere work of literature. Its purpose was to call to arms, and in this it was successful. Nor would it be right to-day to seek to conceal this fact, to criticize the book solely from the artistic point of view, to deny that its adversaries had any just grounds for carrying the contest on to the field of the author's religious convictions. Personally we hold that the merit of this novel lies in the fact that it constituted a movement in itself. It was fighting for an idea ; it was therefore just that those holding contrary ideas should fight against it. But we cannot help feeling that the dust raised by all these polemics prevented its critics from obtaining a sufficiently clear view of the author's precise and basic convictions. I believe, therefore, that it will not be amiss to re-examine the religious inspiration of *The Saint*, viewing it with greater composure and in the light of Fogazzaro's whole life and thought ; replying to certain groups of adversaries, of inquisitors, not in the spirit of the controvertist, not as one who seeks to defend, but rather as one who would illumine that which intolerance and incomprehension may have rendered obscure.

In the first place it will be well to place the starting-point of this religious reform (or perhaps renewal is the better word) in its true light ; to look at it as Fogazzaro himself understood it, be-

cause in this respect both sides have misunderstood him. The documents by means of which I have illustrated his line of thought and his art, have, I believe, satisfactorily established the fact of his catholicity. He was a firm believer in the Church. He was one of the few in Italy to whom church-membership was a serious matter, an ever-present element in his life, and not a mere question of hearing Mass on Sunday and receiving the Viaticum when consciousness should have already lapsed. This man believed—if we allow for differences of genius, of temperament and of epoch—as Dante, Savonarola and Manzoni had believed. Therefore the spirit of his reform gushed forth from that same devotion ; it was the censure that is born of faith ; and herein he was but following the current of the Italian spirit. In no other country has religious revolution—schism and heterodoxy—been less effectual than in our own ; in no other country have the voices of saints and lay prophets been raised more loudly in condemnation of the corruption of the Christian spirit. Both by temperament and by tradition Fogazzaro belonged to this current of inner opposition to formalistic and authoritative ecclesiasticism. His whole upbringing had been imbued with this spirit. A careful examination of Catholic liberalism reveals it as a movement for religious reform which had resulted in the separation of the Church from temporal power as a first step towards a more radical purification. Fogazzaro followed in the footsteps of the generation that had preceded his own ; he continued in the path Manzoni, Rosmini and Tommaseo had trod, if to continue means to advance and to overcome ever new obstacles. His fathers had passed on to him their attitude of relentless animosity towards all that was corrupt and enfeebled in the ecclesiastical institution ; but as had been the case with all of his masters, so in him also this ideal revolt was combined with a passionate love of the Church in her incorruptible essence. Dante, who looked with contemning eyes upon the imperfections and vices of men, of pontiffs and of priests, and at the same time was wrapt in estatic contemplation of the *Celestial Rose* of the Church triumphant which has its roots in the Church militant—Dante, who saw in the same person the “usurper” of Peter’s place and the Vicar of Christ ; Manzoni, who could not control his joy on the fall of the temporal power, while at the same

time he burst forth into one of the most sublime of Catholic songs in praise of the Mother of Saints, are the great examples of that magnificent equilibrium which enables the genius of our race to live Catholicism without servility or confusion. Fogazzaro derived his inspiration from these great examples, harmonizing within himself the discrepancy between the real and the ideal, between the visible and the invisible, between what is human and what is divine in the Church ; a discrepancy which, in peoples less capable of abstraction, has resulted in a dismembering protest.

Nothing, therefore, can be more false than to affirm with Faguet, that Fogazzaro possessed a "Lutheran" soul. Such a statement can but prove that its author is unfamiliar with one of the most deeply rooted and enduring characteristics of the Italian mind ; that he is unfamiliar with that "Savonarolian" opposition to Roman ecclesiasticism which, in the greatest, has always gone hand in hand with the ardent desire for unity, the recognition of the Papacy as a central rallying point, and with a love that is composed of discipline and of freedom, for the visible Church. To Fogazzaro Catholicism was also the central truth for which we live. To detach oneself from that centre meant the dissipation of one's powers, meant spiritual barrenness. To labour within the sphere of that central truth was, in a way, to labour for the whole of religious humanity. In his opinion a true reform could originate only in the very heart of Christianity, and the heart of Christianity resided in the Roman Church, because her sway is universal, because she is more capable than any other of living the spirit of Christ, not according to the letter which is lifeless, but according to living tradition. This view explains certain condemnatory passages concerning Protestantism that occur in his novel, and also accounts for the conversion to Catholicism of two of his female characters. These condemnatory passages and conversions are not introduced merely for the purpose of emphasizing a point, as some would seek to insinuate ; they are absolutely in keeping with Fogazzaro's line of thought as an Italian, Catholic reformer.

Nevertheless, while resolutely championing this form of faith, Fogazzaro laboured to break down those walls that for

centuries have separated the Christian Churches, for to him the truth of Catholicism was a central but not an exclusive truth. The fire that was kept alive within the Church was burning for the whole of humanity and not for a part alone. The tradition she cherished was the common heritage of all who believe in Christ, and in a certain way also of those who do not believe in Him. Catholicism was not the stronghold of theologians, but a light set in the world, a supreme truth encompassing the whole of humanity, having its part in the lives of all men, in the East as in the West. Rather than as a closed kingdom beyond whose boundaries there is but deep shadow, he saw the Catholic Church as a light " . . . illumining all things according as they are worthy, so that nothing can escape it. He felt that the fulness of light is only at the centre, as in the yellow of Dante's rose, but he believed also that, in a lesser degree, the central truth illumined all that is capable of receiving light ; that it sent its rays wherever there is hope or faith in goodness on earth, even into those regions where religion is become but dusky twilight. Therefore it seemed to him that the best way to overcome differences was not by continuing to hurl anathema or by raising walls of doctrine and controversy against dissenters and outsiders, but by intensifying the central life, and thus rendering stronger the light of the Truth it holds, that others may feel its warmth, that it may shine even upon those who are farthest removed from it. To him it was not a question of re-establishing a union by means of reciprocal exterior concessions, or of arriving at a form of Christianity so colourless that all may accept it ; it was a question of living, in the fulness of faith, that which is indeed capable of uniting, of bringing home to humanity a sense of brotherhood in Christ that never has been nor ever can be cancelled ; by speaking in that mother tongue which the scattered members of the great Christian family can still understand—the language of the Gospels.

Thus did Fogazzaro reconcile within himself three elements which may, at times, strike the careless reader as incompatible : unbounded faith in the Roman Church, the consciousness of the need of her inner reform for the good of all, and a comprehensive tolerance even of imperfect Christianity and of all those Churches

and religious associations which, while separated from the one and only root, are nevertheless connected with it by secret tendrils, and which, through the very fact of their disjunction, represent, perhaps, necessary moments and partial affirmations of one final harmony which is truly Catholic. His conception, therefore, of a religious renewal was not that of regression towards the religion of the book, towards the religion of the letter—whose cold and formal rigidity is so clearly apparent throughout the entire range of Protestantism—but that of progress in the religion of the Sacrament and of the living word.

Having established this fundamental Catholicism as underlying the inspiration of *The Saint*, it now becomes necessary to explain what form the “renewal” of the Church took in Fogazzaro’s mind, and what he understood by the “new spirit” that was to enter into her. It seems to me that to all who bring an unbiased mind to bear upon his theories, Fogazzaro himself has clearly shown that this new spirit is to him the fathoming of what is eternal, the search for the living current so often concealed from those who accept only the forms of a religion to which they comply from pure force of habit and inertia. After all, what he strove to bring about was a return to Christ, a closer contact with the spirit of the Gospels. His renewal was to be neither formal, external nor visible. What he asked of the Pope, indeed, concerned only some slight modifications in church government, a fact this that has been pointed to with scorn. He begged that some liberal cardinals of Bonomelli’s type might be appointed; that the Pope would come forth from the Vatican; that the works of Giovanni Selva be not exposed to condemnation by the Congregation of the Index; that the use of the great ceremonial fans be abolished: and these were all things that, for the last half-century liberal-minded Catholics had been hoping to see accomplished—modest enough aspirations indeed. But to Fogazzaro all this possessed but the value of a sign; what he really demanded of the Church was a great internal reform, not of her government, but of her spirit. The Church was diseased; he was not the only one to assert this and to suffer from the knowledge of her infirmity. For centuries Catholicism, or rather—to speak more accurately—the hierarchy, had been

gradually developing the predominant characteristics of a coercive, Mosaic organization. Ecclesiastical autocracy had been becoming every day more pronounced, until all power, all action that was not directly and exclusively curialistic and papal had gradually been suppressed. This process had originated at the Council of Trent as a reactionary movement against Protestantism, but the Council of the Vatican and the last three pontiffs had given it an alarming impetus. On the other hand, as the hierarchy became more inflexible, the great mass of the faithful became correspondingly benumbed. The hierarchy having arrogated all religious action to itself and made passive obedience an absolute condition of existence within its sphere, the laity had gradually grown indifferent to the life of the Church, as to that of a world foreign to their occupations, their studies, their controversies.

To save the principle of authority—which, indeed, is so indispensable—a vacuum had been created around it, and Catholics who were under the obligation simply to obey, to submit to discipline and recognize the teachings of theology, thinking as little as possible for themselves (let us not forget the struggles and bitter disappointments of all the great masters of Catholic thought during the last centuries), had ended by resigning themselves to allow all their activities in science, art and philosophy to develop in a sphere foreign to that of religion ; to divide their spiritual activity, or rather to empty their Catholicism of every intellectual and active element. Thus in juxtaposition to *ecclesiasticism*—by which is meant the closed and exclusive domination of a jealous clergy—*laicism* had come to be formed and was the sphere of all activity that was independent and free from ecclesiastical interference—a sphere closed, for reasons of defence, against every breath of religious inspiration. The world of reason was set up against the world of theology—intellectualism against intellectualism—liberty against authority, with reciprocal exclusion. Civilization was developing along its own lines without the participation of the religious element, by which in the past all activity had been inspired, and religion was surrounding itself with an ever-narrowing circle of formulas, rites, laws, decrees and condemnations,

choosing to forgo, for the sake of a static orthodoxy, every contact, all assimilation with other forms of activity and of human association. To the masses religion had become a tradition, a memory, a habit, often merely a superstition. Only to the few was it life, an inspiration, a central fire.

Such was the disease which Fogazzaro believed was undermining the Catholic body, and numbness and rigidity were but two aspects of the same disease, from which the head and every member suffered alike. In order to be healed—and herein lay his reform—Catholicism must again become action and life according to the spirit of Christ. *The Saint* is but the herald of this great aspiration towards an evangelical renewal, proceeding from within. To him it was no question of external rearrangement, of formal alterations such as an anti-clericalism that has but a limited sense of the lessons of history may invoke; it was no question of bringing the Pope back to the nets and the bark, and it is for this reason the things Benedetto demands of the Holy Father seem of slight importance. It was a question of rediscovering within the institutional forms the basis of the moral and religious life of Christianity; of delving deep into each one of us, to the very source of the living waters, to the primal reason for which the Church exists, namely, the triumph of the Kingdom of God in us and in all men. The time was come for proving the vitality of Catholicism by living it, preaching it, acting it; for transcending both ecclesiasticism and laicism in the charity of our works. The world must have proof that the spirit of Christ was still alive in the Church, and that a closer contact with this spirit would suffice to cover with fresh green that which appeared dry and barren. It was no longer possible to reconquer the world by means of theology. The living word of facts was necessary to stir the emotions and communicate an intimate knowledge of the Saviour. In the midst of a dechristianized civilization the Church must make herself the servant of servants; she must act; she must neither argue nor condemn; she must live the Gospel word in its entirety until the day should dawn wherein men would sense the value of her message. Proud intellects might rebel against the arguments of theology, but before a faith that was become life itself, the most hostile would

end by bowing down as before a revelation of truth. This was what was already happening wherever there appeared a sign of virtue born of secret contact with the transcendental ; and by means of their works certain souls, albeit humble and scattered among hostile groups, often succeeded in spreading conviction of the beauty of a doctrine, where innumerable sermons might have been of no avail. More eloquent than the most sententious of apologists speaking from the rostrum was their manner of loving their neighbour, some simple act of theirs in the presence of poverty or infirmity. Fogazzaro therefore addressed such words as the following to the clergy :

“ Begin by showing us what it means to live according to the spirit of Christ. Speak to us of Him by your actions. Fill us with the understanding of the truth you possess. Render yourselves indispensable to the society in which you live, and be truly superior so that the world may be forced to recognize that there is a moral force at work within you differing from any with which it is familiar. Show yourselves the forerunners of a higher humanity, the messengers of a purer life.”

Such was the inner revolution which Fogazzaro proposed to the Catholic clergy. He was well aware that nothing could work a deeper and more radical reform in the hierarchy than the evangelical spirit lived again in its entirety. All that is antiquated, unfruitful, mean or sordid in the Church would fall of itself when brought into contact with the eternal Renovator. Life and action in the spirit of Christ would lead the clergy to a reform far more real than could innumerable theological disputations that do but degenerate into dissension.

Still another aspiration is voiced in the novel—one that has been frequently misunderstood, namely, the more direct participation by the laity in the life of the Church. Fogazzaro never denied his faith in a visible and hierarchical Church, nor did he ever attempt to obliterate by subtle means, all distinction between the Church didactic and the Church neophytic, between those in authority and their subjects. But at a moment when this distinction was become so exclusive as gradually to reduce the laity to a position of passiveness that amounted almost to inertia, in the presence of an indifference on the part of the dis-

ciples which was due to a preponderance of power on the part of the teachers, he felt the necessity for reaffirming the perennial and fundamental unity of Christianity, that the Church might no longer be considered merely as "the priests' business," nor be regarded as something to be left exclusively to their domination ; but rather as a common heritage, wherein all are brothers and authority is but service ; a living organism whereof the head is as necessary a part as the members, although these may also vary according to an ascending scale. He felt the necessity occasioned by this indolent submission to exterior discipline for reaffirming the fact of the active participation of great Christians, who felt themselves to be both of use and free in the Church, as every member of a living body is free—the mystical body of Christ. Fogazzaro did not deny the necessity for rules, for the hierarchy and for discipline ; but this necessity having been emphasized to the point of exaggeration by those in authority, he felt it of greater importance to insist rather upon the foundation to which the distinction owes its origin and to which it is of service ; to insist upon one life that must animate both the heart and the members, the priest and the layman, the pontiff and the most humble believer. He realized the importance of laying stress upon the great truth that, whereas each one of us is a tendril, so does each one of us draw life directly from the Vine. To him this seemed another reason why the laity should participate in the inner reformation of the Church, should act in some way upon the authority, and contribute their share of experience, of wisdom and of the life drawn from reality.

Catholicism does not reside in the hierarchy alone. It is not of an exclusive caste enclosed within a temple surrounded by anathemas. The Spirit may work in any part of it at will. What the figure of the Saint stands for above all else, is the layman who addresses the laity and the clergy in God's name ; who is entrusted with a mission that is almost sacerdotal, as real saints have been entrusted with missions that were not anti-hierarchical, but extra-hierarchical. This is what he sought to express in that much discussed allegory of the quarryman.

To two young men who came to him for instruction, for a word of guidance Benedetto hesitates to respond, but finally, by means

of a piece of powerful imagery he reveals his own conception of the limitations and nature of his apostolate.

“ Listen to this allegory,” Fogazzaro makes Benedetto say : “ Thirsty pilgrims draw near to a famous fountain. They find its basin full of stagnant water, disgusting to the taste. The living spring is at the bottom of the basin ; they do not find it. Sadly they turn for aid to a quarryman working in a neighbouring quarry. The quarryman offers them living water. They inquire the name of the spring. ‘ It is the same as the water in the basin,’ he replies. ‘ Underground it is all one and the same stream. He who digs will find it.’ You are the thirsty pilgrims, I am the humble quarryman and Catholic Truth is the hidden, underground current.”

Such was Fogazzaro’s conviction, a faith falsely interpreted by the more timid among the orthodox who sought to find in it a leaning towards Protestantism that was foreign to its nature. This faith of his was supported by the purest and most glorious Catholic tradition ; it was closely linked to that intense spiritual life of the Middle Ages when religion was not cherished and glorified by priests alone. I recall with what glowing enthusiasm he would speak in this connection of great laymen who had played an active part in the life of the Church. Dante and St. Francis were to him as two gigantic figures placed by the Almighty on the threshold of the mediæval Church as guardians of the inviolable rights of an inspiration that is not confined to one caste, of a ministry of the Word to which both saints and poets may be freely called. The lover of Poverty and the poet of ultramundane kingdoms both clearly demonstrated in their lives and works, that even in Catholicism there is still room for prophets who may confront the hierarchy, and that reform does not always descend from those in authority, but frequently, indeed, rises from those souls that thirst most ardently for truth, goodness and beauty. The greatest spiritual reform of the Middle Ages was the work of the little brother of Assisi, who was the Gospel messenger and Christ’s interpreter, although he had neither been anointed as a priest nor consecrated as a teacher ; and in the history of his country and of the Church, Dante holds a place like that of the prophets of old, he the author of a sacred volume

that is one of the glories of Catholicism ; he the uncompromising judge of pontiffs and clerics by the undisputed right of genius—a right derived not from any external authority, but from his own imperious consciousness of a duty to be accomplished by a confession of truth. Throughout the centuries Dante has stood as the guarantee for that freedom of character and of speech in the Church which no one would ever be able to circumscribe. He is typical of the lay-prophet whose work is indeed true ministration. His art was priesthood, and what his art represented in the Church was an ineffaceable sign of that divine light that illumines, where and in what manner it wills, the loftiest summits of humanity, and that enriches, albeit in ways that are not those of the hierarchy, the spiritual treasure of the universal Church. The *Divine Comedy* may not be considered solely as a work of pure poetry ; it is one of the great books of Catholicism wherein a layman has written of the things that are of God, and spoken in His name to His representatives from a height that rendered his right to do so indisputable. He remains the most sublime expression of a sphere that is ever open for the inspiration of creative and reformatory genius.

Fogazzaro, however, held that the action of the laity should not be confined to such rare illuminations and revelations ; that it should be able to operate both directly and constantly within the Church and side by side with the priesthood, as an heroic and militant element. It is to this point that he alludes in speaking of the Knights of the Holy Spirit.

“ I see in the future,” he writes, “ Catholic laymen striving zealously for Christ and for truth and finding a means of constituting unions that differ from those of the present. They will one day take arms as Knights of the Holy Spirit, banding together for the united defence of God, and of Christian morality in the fields of science, of art and of civil and social life ; for the united defence of legitimate liberty in the field of religion. They will be under certain special obligations, not, however, of community of living or of celibacy, incorporating the office of the Catholic clergy to which they will not be affiliated as an Order, but only in their private capacity and in the individual practice of Catholicism. Pray that God’s will concerning this work may be

made manifest in the souls of those who contemplate it. Pray that these souls may willingly strip themselves of all pride in having conceived this work, and of all hope of witnessing its completion should God manifest disapproval of it. But if the Almighty manifest His approval, then pray that men may be taught to organize every detail to His greater glory and to the greater glory of the Church."

These words, whose exact meaning is somewhat obscure, have given rise to suppositions of all sorts ; suppositions of dark plottings for the formation of secret societies composed of the most rebellious and least religious of modernists, for the overthrowing of the clerical institution—a sort of Masonic association working in the dark against authority and hierarchy. These suspicions were probably strengthened by a strong preference for what is anonymous, for clandestine action, for the uselessly mysterious which modernists displayed during the crisis, to the disgust of the freer and less sophisticated intellects. But Fogazzaro had nothing to hide behind the words wherin he expressed the hope that a militia of laymen, with or without a name, might arise and be capable of fighting the great battles of the present day in the name of Christ. He was convinced that the clergy could not fight these battles unaided. It was necessary that spirits should emerge from amongst the faithful capable of living a side of the Christian life which the ecclesiastic does not live ; he felt that, in order to overcome a hostile world, there must arise an exemplary generation of men—strong, pure and without blemish—who would carry Christian inspiration into the plenitude of the normal life, who would live their faith as men in the midst of men, untrammelled by vows and vested with no authority that might separate them from civil life. They need be but few in number, but all must be truly imbued with the Spirit, all possessed by the idea of glorifying it by every act ; they must be the embodiment of determination straining towards the absolute and perfect. The world must be made to see that Christianity is both tragic and virile. In past centuries it had sought refuge in cloisters, upon mountain heights and in solitary places. The time was now come to live it in the midst of the deafening noise of a civilization that labours ; to call it forth

from the cell and give it the vastnesses of the world for a dwelling-place ; to free it from the obligation of mortifying the flesh and encourage it to cultivate an inner righteousness that refuses to feed on evil thoughts and derives its strength from what is noble and pure alone.

Wherever there was work to be done in the cause of justice, wherever life was to be sacrificed for others, wherever there was open strife for the good of humanity, there was the place for the Knights of the Holy Spirit, even though they forfeit all, strip themselves of all things for the love of truth and their fellow-men. No formal bond of solidarity would unite them save that of the vow to be the first in sacrifice, the first to despoil themselves, to know how to die, to be the bravest in defending the weak against the world's injustice, the most obedient to that inner Voice which not only proclaims the way of strict justice, but to him who knows how to listen to it, dictates the act and the sublime word which only to the few is it given to perform and to utter. Such was Antonio Fogazzaro's last great dream.

The Saint, therefore, is not merely a work of fiction, nor is it a simple work of art that may be judged from the æsthetic standpoint alone. It is a book of ideas, a battle fought by a believer who is firmly convinced that his faith, the faith of his fathers, may be renewed in the present day, may be revitalized by the breath of science and of charity, and, once renewed, may again become an all-pervading element of that society from which it has been excluded. As such, indeed, *The Saint* is destined to remain one of the few books that have stirred public opinion not only in Italy, but throughout the world, by placing before the present generation a problem to be solved.

Italy is a land of moderation and of sceptical prudence. Humanism and the counter-reformation, acting in opposite ways, have sapped her interest in religious problems. Theological disputations, invidious alike to pagan renascence and to Catholic reaction, have been silent for centuries, and of this the practical result has been to bring about a general indifference to religious matters as elements of vital importance in the life of a people. An interest in all problems concerning the Almighty and curiosity with regard to what is eternal, as these sentiments existed in the

century and in the heart of Dante, have little by little been benumbed by neo-paganism and clericalism.

To Fogazzaro, then, is due the merit of having sought to break through the time-hardened crust of scepticism, of moderation, of practical prudence, of self-seeking equilibrium; of having uttered in *The Saint* one of those impulsive words that reveal a state of suppressed mystical unrest. The great merit of *The Saint* resides precisely in the fact that it came to trouble the consciences of many, that it acted as a sharp goad upon those opposite factions whose common interest it was to watch over the slumbers of the problems by which man is at once saddened and exalted.

On its appearance, in fact, *The Saint* produced a profound impression. Few novels of our day have made themselves so widely felt. The most prominent men in Europe became interested in this religious message, which came as a sign of the new direction in which Christianity was bound to develop.

During the first half of the year 1906 the book was read and discussed in all countries, by people of all creeds. The letters received by its author during this period, both from obscure individuals and from celebrities, would fill a volume, and another would barely suffice to hold the mass of critical writings from the most favourable, such as the article by De Vogt, to the most sectarian and scathing, such as those by Rastignac.

In Italy, however, it was Fogazzaro's fate to be constantly abused both by the Reds and Blacks. His novel, in fact, aroused much unexpected violence on both sides. The non-concessionists on either side furiously attacked this Catholic writer who had mercilessly lashed both forms of sectarianism. "I deliberately courted certain attacks," Fogazzaro wrote at this time, "but the Masonic onslaught was violent *ultra spem*." At bottom, he delighted in this sectarian rage that betrayed the secret thought of those who served as its mouthpiece. He felt that the true reason for so much wrathful antagonism lay in the dread of a Christian revival.

From the lowest strata of clericalism, where ignoble thought had had an embittering effect, there came the rumbling threat

of war without quarter to be waged against *The Saint*. Instead of examining the book in the light of its fundamental principles, it was subjected to a pin-point analysis; every word, every sentence was subjected to such pressure as to cause it to emit a drop of error. The purposes of the work were inquisitorially examined and distorted into forming a long list of deadly heresies. Animosities towards its spirit prompted the critics of the book to seek to condemn its author in the letter. No matter what one's view of the catholicity of its doctrine may be, the fact remains that the criticism to which it was subjected in homage to orthodoxy was so mendaciously sectarian as to render it unworthy of consideration by an objective historian.

Nevertheless, all this libellous criticism was far from representing the general opinion entertained in the ecclesiastical world. *The Saint* had been favourably received by many of high standing in the Church; amongst its admirers were cardinals, archbishops, bishops, monks and devout laymen. Many letters brought to Fogazzaro the echo of their approval which was in singular contradiction with the judgments expressed in the clerical Press, and the author was extremely gratified to find that the fundamental honesty of his intentions was appreciated by the choicest spirits. The very fact of the hostile attitude which anti-clericalism had assumed towards the book appeared to have influenced in its favour even those who could not approve of it in its entirety. They realized that a work of fiction is not a treatise on theology, and that, on the other hand, books written in the spirit of Christianity are deserving of all respect in a country and at a time wherein but few in Fogazzaro's position would have braved the censure of laicism. It therefore appeared probable that the word *Index*, concerning which, from the very outset, there had been much speculation, would remain unspoken.

"All who by reason of their office and position are well informed, assure me that there is not the slightest danger of the book being placed on the *Index*," Fogazzaro wrote to Bonomelli. "God grant it may be so! In the highest quarter the book enjoys neither approval nor favour, but it is a long way from this

to the *Index* ! At any rate I have the satisfaction of knowing that my work has helped many.”¹

Towards the beginning of February, however, rumours of a probable condemnation began to circulate persistently, and certain propositions which, in the opinion of a number of theologians, were of an incriminating nature, were openly alluded to. There were the views set forth in *The Saint* concerning the state of the soul in the future life. One was that expressed by Dom Clemente, who is made to say that “after death human souls will probably find themselves in conditions and surroundings regulated by natural laws as in the present life ; where, as in this life, future events may be foreseen by means of certain indications, but without certain knowledge.” This view also appears in a poem composed at this time and entitled *In the Cemetery at Padua*, wherein a woman friend of his who had recently passed away under circumstances that had deeply affected Fogazzaro, replied as follows to the poet’s eager questioning concerning the unknown world : “*So che soffro che spero. Altro non so.*” (I know that I suffer—that I hope. That is all.) The other passage was that wherein Benedetto gravely expresses his opinion to the schoolmistress at Jenne, who has anxiously begged to know how he pictures to himself the future life. “I believe that until the dissolution of our planet our future life will be one of labour upon it, and that all those minds which aspire to truth, to unity, will meet there, and labour together.” It seemed to the majority of theologians that these propositions were opposed to Catholic doctrine, and more especially to the teachings of the Council of Florence, which pronounced as follows : that the souls of those who, after baptism have neither been guilty of sin nor defiled by its contact, are *immediately* received into Heaven, while the souls of those who die in a state of actual and heinous sin *immediately* descend into Hell.

Hereupon Fogazzaro appealed to Capecelatro, anxious to learn his opinion and to justify all that might appear incorrect in his doctrine concerning the future life. He therefore wrote to Don Francesco de Felice begging him to speak to the cardinal

¹ Letter to Monsignor Bonomelli, Rome, December 10, 1905.

in his name. The tone of the prelate's reply, although not entirely favourable, was in striking contrast with the base, malignant and scathing criticisms of the Pharisees of sectarian journalism. It breathed the unruffled tolerance of the true Christian gentleman, the benevolence of a venerable shepherd of souls, the inborn courtesy of the descendant of an ancient race. Had the great Neopolitan cardinal's judgment been made public without delay, it would have put to shame more than one of the third-rate wranglers whose base handling is so fatal to the cause of Catholic apologetics. The letter of this last great representative of Italian guelphism clearly indicated not only all the respect of which one, who might be expected to differ—who was bound indeed to differ from him, held Antonio Fogazzaro worthy ; it also showed that he was deserving of gentle treatment at the hands of the ecclesiastical authorities. Capecelatro declared his conviction that the writer's " intentions were honest and praiseworthy," and this was doubtless a great though secret consolation to the suffering spirit of one who had been offended both in those very intentions and in the sincerity of the faith for which he had laboured and been persecuted.

Almost at the same moment a further consolation was vouchsafed to him. The following passage occurred in a letter of an entirely private character, received from Filippo Crispolti :

" Cardinal Agliardi tells me in the *greatest confidence* that, all things considered, he believes that no steps will be taken against *The Saint* ; but that should certain separate propositions appear deserving of censure after careful and minute examination, the consideration which was shown to Cesare Cantù and to others as well, will also be extended to the present distinguished and sincerely Catholic writer, who will be privately notified in order that he may arrange for emendations in future editions"¹

These hopes notwithstanding, however, a decree issued by the Congregation of the Index on April 5, 1906, and published two days later in the *Osservatore Romano*, condemned *The Saint*, together with the works of two other Catholic writers, Laberthonnière and Viollet.

Letter from F. Crispolti, February 14, 1906.

The purpose of the condemnation was made clear by the very silence that had preceded it as well as by the character of the three writers simultaneously condemned. It constituted one of the first acts of determined opposition on the part of the Roman *Curia* against those aspirations towards renewal of which Fogazzaro had stood forth as the champion. It was not proposed to attack single errors or separate propositions, but the very spirit with which the novel was imbued, and that was also vaguely stirring within the Church.

Only one possessed of an intimate knowledge of Fogazzaro's soul can form a just appreciation of what he suffered. The honesty of his Catholic convictions, the sensibility of his conscience, family traditions and affections, the dread of shocking pious souls who were dear to him as well as others who were unknown to him, the desire to disobey neither those in authority nor his own conscience, were all elements that rendered this period one of torment. To those outside the Church such intense suffering may appear childish or even foolish, but he who knows the all-encompassing power of Catholicism to sway the sentiments of those who have been born within the fold, who have dwelt and believed therein, will readily understand how violent must be the inner shock resulting from an act which stamps the mark of error upon a work born of the soul itself. To Fogazzaro it constituted an inner tragedy, a complex struggle defying analysis, wherein sentiment played the leading part; but reason was also actively engaged. In his heart, as always in hours of torment, he heard the gentle voices of his dead, warning him against the rebellion of his self-esteem, against a "rage that sets the nerves aquiver." "I felt them suffering within me," he said, "as they would have suffered on earth had they seen me struck down by the Church they had loved and venerated. I heard them entreating me to submit, as they themselves would have done; and their exhortations certainly acted strongly against my own weakness."

But the fact that he refrained from assuming an attitude of defiance against the decree that had been pronounced against him was not due entirely to the exhortations of the dead. In the course of the silent meditations in which he indulged at this

period the true value of logical coherence became manifest to him. While all around him the general public was inciting him to rebellion by means of the praise they lavished upon him, he himself came to realize the value of certain pronouncements made openly, the consequences of which that very public was striving to make him forget ; he recalled his promises in connection with the supreme religious authority—promises that constituted a debt of honour which fate now summoned him to meet. It was a fact that in speaking of the praiseworthy attitude Rosmini had maintained when two of his books were placed upon the *Index*, Fogazzaro had praised the high-mindedness that had prompted him “ to say ‘ I obey,’ to pronounce those words that to him who is neither a devout believer nor a soldier may seem a proof of cowardice.” The fatal hour had now struck for him also to show that the most manly form of courage is the following of life’s inner logic even to the point of committing an action “ at which the world scoffs.” The strongest temptation would have been to reverse the values according to his own passions, consenting to appear courageous in the eyes of the world, while in reality he knew himself to be otherwise. But the declarations of obedience he had made in *The Saint* laid him under an obligation, both as regards the Church and history, to prove that they were not the empty spoutings of the mere man of letters, but the firm convictions of a devout believer. It was imperative that even at the cost of bitter, inner suffering, he should confirm the sincerity of these declarations, that he should re-consecrate them by the sacrifice involved in the performance of an act of obedience towards an authority which it was all the more meritorious to recognize, insomuch as (fortunately for itself) it had lost all outward power of enforcing obedience to its decrees.

On the other hand, however, he felt that this act of obedience could not, should not, indeed, be a renunciation either real or apparent of his most deeply rooted convictions. To suddenly deny his own beliefs, to denounce them, to hold to them no longer would not be a religious act, because it would be inhuman. The Church could demand no more of him than the humility of one who realizes his own fallibility and consents, in a spirit of meekness, to re-examine his whole line of thought and all that he has

written. It therefore seemed to him that silence should suffice to express his submission to the law that had wounded him, both in his writings and in his conscience. The one word *silentium* was his reply to a journalist who, amidst the confusion of noisy polemics, had interrogated him concerning the line of conduct he meant to follow. He sought refuge in that word so full of sacred mystery, feeling confident that it would reveal to the world the nature of his unquestioning but painful determination to obey. Those of his friends who were best fitted to judge also believed that the word *silentium* would suffice.

In reality, however, it did not bring that peace he felt he had the right to expect, and a cup of supreme bitterness was being prepared for him at the approaching Eastertide. And here I must allow certain letters to speak that are better adapted than any words of mine could be to guide us in forming an objective and dispassionate judgment of this episode.

April 12, 1906.

DEAREST FRIEND,—What we feared has come to pass. I have been asked for a public declaration. I begged for time to consider, but immediately offered (under certain conditions) to publish a letter containing the statement that, in consequence of the decree, I would refrain from authorizing any further translations. As a matter of fact, I have composed two letters within the last few days, for I had honestly purposed to obey in silence. My confessor has told me plainly that I cannot receive the sacrament; but he has promised to ascertain whether a letter will suffice. I assure you I am in great grief.

(Letter to T. G. S.)

VICENZA, April 17, 1906.

BEST OF FRIENDS,—Your letter came as balm to my spirit. Now I am awaiting another! Kindly thank His Eminence for his prayers, and tell him that, had I been forewarned, with the consideration usually exercised in dealing with Catholic writers, of the error contained in the proposition concerning the state of souls after death, I would have promised to correct it, and even to have it omitted in future editions. Dear friend, although I am shut out from Christ, as I believe unjustly, I feel His presence more strongly than ever, and more strongly than ever

do I also realize my own shortcomings and long to rid myself of them in so far as is possible !

(Letter to Don F. de Felice.)

VICENZA, April 20, 1906.

BEST OF FRIENDS,—It is the unanimous opinion of the clergy of Milan, to whom I appealed at the same time as to yourself, that none of the measures adopted against me justify my exclusion from participation in the sacraments, and I was offered the privilege of performing my Easter duties. I accepted, and the ecclesiastic who received my confession (at Milan)—a person distinguished for his learning and for the holiness of his life—assured me of his willingness to assume all responsibility for his act. I received Communion in the cathedral at Milan, and, acting on the advice of the priest to whom I have already alluded, I shall receive it again to-day in my parish church here in Vicenza. Of my own free will and with the approval of my confessor, who, however, did not constrain me to do so, I dispatched a letter (from Milan) to Crispolti for publication, which contains the declaration of my intention of submitting to the decree, as I am bound to do as a Catholic; that is to say, I will abstain from discussing it and also from any act contrary to its dictates, such as the authorization of new translations, editions, etc. The letter will appear, perhaps has already appeared, in the *Avvenire d'Italia*. Do me the favour of acquainting His Eminence with this fact. When I spoke of cowardice, I expressed myself wrongly and imperfectly. It would not be an act of cowardice, but an actual sin against my own conscience, against the Spirit, were I to declare myself repentant for having written *The Saint*. I would never make such a declaration. I am grateful both to the cardinal and to yourself for your precious words. At last my spirit has found a peace which I hope I may be allowed to continue to enjoy.—Your

ANTONIO FOGAZZARO.

(Letter to Don F. de Felice.)

Here is the letter which Fogazzaro dispatched to the Marchese Filippo Crispolti, authorizing him to publish it when and in the manner he might judge fitting.

April 18, 1906.

DEAR FRIEND,—I owe it to you indeed to acquaint you with the line of conduct I intend to pursue with regard to the

decree issued by the Congregation of the Index, condemning *The Saint*.

From the very beginning it has been my intention to render that obedience to the decree which my duty as a Catholic imposes upon me; in other words, I shall refrain from discussing it, and also from any act that is contrary to its dictates, such as the authorization of translations and editions other than those for which I had signed agreements previous to the issuing of the decree, and which it would be impossible to cancel. You now know what my intentions are. I could wish them to be known to all, and I therefore beg you to have this letter published in a periodical of your own choosing. With deep gratitude and sincere friendship.—I am, yours . . .

ANTONIO FOGAZZARO.

Crispolti published the letter in the *Avvenire d'Italia* with the addition of a favourable comment composed by a high dignitary of the Church, whose identity I am now at liberty to reveal. It was Cardinal Svampa. A few days later Crispolti wrote as follows to Fogazzaro :

TURIN, April 23, 1906.

DEAR FRIEND,—On receipt of your registered letter I sent you only a few brief lines, because I was still unaware how your declaration would be regarded by the person in authority whom I had requested to decide what manner of comment upon it should appear in the *Avvenire*. Nor did I tell you that I had consulted with any one. But in a question of such delicacy I could not allow the *Avvenire* to stand unsupported in expressing opinions, the result perhaps of insufficient knowledge and of irreflection, which might prove distasteful both to Rome and to yourself. At the same time, had the person consulted advised me not to publish the declaration in the *Avvenire*, I should have regretted having compromised him in your eyes by naming him. Now I am at liberty to tell you that it was Cardinal Svampa. . . . He has this day returned your letter to me with the comment : "I am delighted that Senator Fogazzaro has performed this noble action." I will not attempt to tell you how glad I am to have been chosen to help you in performing it. . . .

A few days later Cardinal Agliardi echoed the sentiments expressed by Cardinal Svampa in the following words :

ALBANO LAZIALE, April 22, 1906.

TO SENATOR A. FOGAZZARO,—After the condemnation of *The Saint* your *silentium* was silver, but the letter you have now addressed to the Marchese Crispolti is pure gold. I hasten to congratulate you upon the public act of submission which you have made to the authority of the Church. Certain individuals and certain actions never rise above the common level; an exalted and eminently Italian individuality and a soul overflowing with faith and honesty such as you possess were necessary to enable you to set this flaccid and presumptuous generation of ours an example of Christian rectitude that will long be remembered. If, therefore, I have heretofore been attached to you by the high esteem in which I have always held you, I now feel myself doubly bound to you by ties of the most affectionate reverence, and I have the honour to subscribe myself,—Your most devoted servant,

A. CARDINAL AGLIARDI.

Cardinal Capecelatro also expressed his approval to Fogazzaro as follows :

April 25, 1906.

ILLUSTRIOS AND REVERED SENATOR,—You have certainly done even more than could have been expected of a faithful Catholic. When the Most Eminent Cardinal advised you to address a letter such as the one you have now sent to Crispolti, to the Pope himself, it was because he hoped the matter might be quietly settled between the pontiff and yourself. This was probably an illusion due to the tolerance and kindness of his own spirit. Now, however, he rejoices above all else in the knowledge that you have received Christ in the sacrament, and he hopes with you that you may henceforth be left in peace.—

F. DE FELICE.

Fogazzaro replied in the following terms :

VICENZA, April 28, 1906.

BEST OF FRIENDS,—I have but done what Benedetto would have done. I have submitted to the dictates of authority without straining my conscience by any useless resistance; and I have acted thus of my own free will, neither as a result of compulsion brought to bear upon me by my exclusion from participation in the sacraments (which measure I have since been assured was unwarranted) nor by adopting the words of any formula imposed upon me. I have always been willing to obey, and I am glad to

have done so publicly, precisely because it seems to me that I have hereby given more positive proof that the book is the work of a Catholic, that the protestations of respect for authority it contains are in no wise mendacious. After all, dear friend, the responsibility assumed by the Congregation of the Index in this as in other cases, is very grave. I cannot help fearing that worse is to come. I beg you to communicate the entire contents of this letter to His Eminence, and to express to him my most respectful homage.—With all my heart, your

ANTONIO FOGAZZARO.

To these documents, which illustrate but a few of the many marks of approval of his act of submission which Fogazzaro received, must be added a letter from another prelate—from Cardinal Mathieu—who had but recently been enrolled among the “immortals” at the French Academy.

ROME, *July 30, 1906.*

DEAR AND ILLUSTRIOS SENATOR,—Can you forgive me for my silence? I am the worst of correspondents but the most faithful of friends and admirers, and my heart has no part in the sins of omission my pen commits. I should have written to you long since, but I was worn out by my trip to Paris, and since my return I have been overwhelmed by a flood of congratulations to which I must perforce respond. Your congratulations touched me deeply, and I must also thank you for having contributed towards my success. But let us speak of yourself. You have set an admirable example by your submission to the decree of the Congregation of the Index, and are hereby become a true confessor of the faith. Condemned, insulted on all sides, you have stood the trial with a courage worthy of the loftiness of your character, and for which you will sooner or later be rewarded, perhaps even in this world. A cardinal may not question the pronouncements of a Roman tribunal, but this sentence has not cancelled the genius of which you have given proof (nor, indeed, was it intended to do so), the beauties contained in your book and the noble inspiration under which you composed it. I believe that with but a few corrections the work could be rendered irreproachable. This task may perhaps tempt you some day, and its accomplishment might even induce the ecclesiastical world to make reparation. You have already been magnificently vindicated by M. de Vogüé, whose article I received this morning

and read with much satisfaction. Take your revenge, my dear sir, as did the *sun* of Jean Baptiste Rousseau. The god, following his course, shed torrents of light upon the benighted wretches who had blasphemed against him. I will do my best to pay you a visit at Vicenza after my holiday, upon which I set out to-night. This visit must remain *incognito* and *in nigris*, however, that I also may not be placed on the Index ! Accept, dear Sir, the respectful devotion and most affectionate admiration of your humble servant,

P. D. CARDINAL MATHIEU.

(From the French.)

These letters, showing that four cardinals unreservedly approved of the attitude assumed by Fogazzaro after the condemnation of *The Saint*, are well worthy of consideration and valuable as documents in view of the senator's actual position in the Church after his act of submission. While men who were highly esteemed, both for the holiness of their lives and for their erudition, men invested with the sacred purple, were enthusiastic in their praise of his act ; while both his true friends and his honest adversaries, such as Professor G. Toniolo, felt it incumbent upon them to express their admiration for "the truly Christian strength of character displayed by one who had set an example not only to youthful members of the Church, but to every honest citizen of a free and civilized country as well " (Letter from G. Toniolo, Pisa, June 6, 1906), sectarian clericalism, by means of slander and ostracism, had initiated a series of disloyal and underhand attacks upon him.

The "spirit of falsehood" that he had denounced to the pontiff strove against him as long as he lived ; it cast a shadow of sadness over his gentle equanimity and enhanced the melancholy of his declining years. Had the war but been waged openly ! His worst enemies, however, never showed their faces, never allowed their true names to transpire ; and, as we shall see, this man, who had made the most painful of sacrifices on the altar of his fathers' faith, was destined once more to suffer the humiliation of unjust exclusion from participation in the sacraments. As long as he lived he was forced to beg for absolution, as might any obscure penitent, at some convent where the meek friar who

raised his hand in absolution was probably unaware of the identity of the man who craved it so humbly, and he was perpetually tormented by the dread lest, on his death-bed, absolution might be withheld from him. "It seems," he wrote to Bonomelli, "that the Vicentine non-concessionists demand still more. But more I am not prepared to say. I thank God for this tribulation which has been sent for my soul's good." What his secret enemies really demanded was his tacit exclusion from the bosom of the Church. To their shame be it remembered that there were other men in high places, men universally respected, who openly avowed their appreciation of Antonio Fogazzaro's sacrifice, and proclaimed him a loyal Catholic, while in the name of Catholicism life was being rendered every day more painful, more difficult for him.

It was Fogazzaro's destiny to experience in his own person all the bitterness his Saint had suffered. Like Benedetto, he did not suffer at the hands of the Pharisees of clericalism alone—he was persecuted also by another secret enemy, another veiled and nameless enemy—by sectarian laicism. His letter to Crispolti had aroused one of the mightiest outbursts of the anti-clerical spirit that modern times have seen. Immediately on the appearance in the columns of the *Avvenire* of his solemn declaration (which, albeit, contained no trace either of humiliating submissiveness or of cowardly retraction) the entire Italian Press rang with what was termed "the Fogazzaro case," and the Masonic lodge and the sacristy adopted a common policy. Rastignac sounded the alarm in the *Tribuna*, and all the confraternities of free-thought responded in chorus, shouting their indignation at the grave offence committed against their fetish by a member of the Supreme Council of Public Instruction! Professors and students rose up as were their own freedom of conscience endangered, as though, in the Council, Fogazzaro might become the blind instrument of clerical invasion. Taking Article 106 of the code controlling public instruction for their war-cry, they clamoured for the suspension from office of one who, having allowed a check to be placed on his own freedom of thought, was no longer capable of defending that of others. They demanded that Fogazzaro be branded with the mark of incompetency and permanently

debarred from participation in the civil life of his country; that, as one anonymous writer advised, he "go and hide himself in a monastery." In the columns of newspapers as at the universities the topic of the day was the "patent moral and civil incongruity between this servile act" and the office held by its perpetrator.

Thus was the fight carried on against him. It was the purpose of Fogazzaro's enemies either to force him to resign his membership of the Supreme Council or, should he refuse to do so, to induce the Ministry to expel him as unworthy to hold office in that body. With this end in view the Hon. Borciani actually put a question to the Minister, acting in this as spokesman for his radical colleagues. "I know nothing more in connection with Borciani's question," Fogazzaro wrote to me at the time. "We shall see whether the *pagan* Holy Office will see fit to banish me to some *Arcetri* called Oria, or Velo, or Montegalda, for, of course, if I am expelled from the Council I shall resign from the Senate."

To Monsignor Bonomelli he wrote :

"As you will have seen, Rastignac's article has aroused much wrath against me both at Milan and Bologna. Another newspaper clamours for my expulsion from the Supreme Council. . . . As it happens there is a portrait of Galileo in the Council hall. If they expel me they should certainly expel poor Galileo also, who made humble, very humble submission to the Holy Office."

He might jest, but his jesting was but a mask to hide, even from those most closely associated with him, the bitterness of the chalice he had accepted, and that he was fated to drain to the dregs, at this time of suffering.

Many authoritative members of the Liberal party, however, felt in duty bound to defend Fogazzaro against the attacks and threats of which he was the object, wherein they clearly perceived a menace to true freedom of thought and action, insomuch as the indirect purpose of this campaign was to demonstrate the incompatibility between a profession of Catholic faith and the tenure of a representative office in the State.

Brought face to face with sectarian laicism, the representatives of the party to whom Italy owes her existence realized what the attitude should be of a State that defends true tolerance against

all odds, that tolerance which is the basis of co-operation between all forms of faith and of thought. Among the most able opponents of the sectarian onslaught it is sufficient to enumerate Gaetano Mosca, whose articles appeared in the *Corriere della Sera*, and Senator Alessandro d' Ancona, who used the columns of the *Giornale d' Italia*. By way of defence these writers championed the pure spirit of liberty which is still constrained to struggle against "reds" and "whites" alike, in order to penetrate to the depths of the national character. Almost on the eve of the discussion of the matter in Parliament, Senator d' Ancona openly declared that, for the sake of the cause of liberty, Antonio Fogazzaro must not withdraw from the post to which he had been appointed. "The alternative may be his dismissal," he wrote in his last article on June 9.

"Anything may happen in this world . . . and especially in Italy; but for the honour of my country I must hold to my conviction that no Minister of hers will be willing to offer such an affront to a man of unblemished and lofty morality, to a writer imbued with the ideals of modernity and whose name is known and respected not only among his fellow-countrymen, but in foreign lands as well. . . . Such an act would constitute a lasting shame for Italy."

What most deeply grieved this great Italian was the fact that the spirit of sectarianism had threatened that freedom of conscience he worshipped, and a noble letter he addressed to Fogazzaro at this time teems with the devotion that had moved him to stand forth openly in defence of this Catholic writer.

It was with admirable composure that Fogazzaro awaited the verdict of Parliament, which, alas! would prove a last affront inflicted upon him by that world he had chastised in the person of the Hon. Albacina, a character in *The Saint*.

The Minister, in fact, failed to appear at the Chamber of Deputies on June 15, when he was expected to reply to the questions put by the Hon. Borciani on the one side and by the Hon. Cameroni on the other. Political prudence had doubtless warned him not to show himself over zealous in defence of the freedom of conscience of a believer of Fogazzaro's stamp. In-

stead of appearing in person, therefore, he put forward the Under Secretary, Hon. Ciuffelli, whose political timidity caused him to cut but a poor figure. Instead of replying in the name of liberty he cautiously entrenched himself behind the law of the land. He declared "that in the code controlling public instruction there exists no clause empowering the Minister to intervene in such a matter as the one under discussion," and he drew the obvious conclusion that consequently the Minister "could not act," allowing it to be understood, however (and this in deference to the Holy *Green* Inquisition—the Masonic institution), that had he been able to act, he would have done so. Not a word did Ciuffelli utter that was worthy of one who is defending a lofty conception; not a word of respect and sympathy for the man whose name stood for pure living and pure art, and this not only in Italy, but far beyond her boundaries as well. Again Benedetto and the Hon. Albacina stood face to face—this time in real life! In all that assembly the Hon. Cameroni alone spoke in Fogazzaro's defence; spoke words that should have come from the Minister uttering them in the name of all—from the Freemason to the devout Catholic. Cameroni's declaration was to the effect that "the religious or philosophic convictions of those who have a place in the Supreme Council or in any other department of the administration must ever be subservient to the rectitude of each individual conscience."

Be this as it may, the Government, represented by an Under Secretary of State, had allowed it to be understood that although Antonio Fogazzaro could not be excluded from all participation in the civil life of Italy, his future activities therein would be but merely tolerated.

Thus but a few short months after the success that had filled the world's Press with his name, he was passing through that hour of solitude and suffering wherein every man, ere death claims him, must taste the bitterness of supreme isolation. It was the hour of the Garden of Olives; the noises of the world were hushed, and the disciples were weary and had fallen asleep. Silence encompassed him. In the Church he had championed in times of hardship and in opposition to innumerable currents

of adverse thought, he was become as a leper to be shunned, who may approach Christ only in secret. In Italy, the land he had served and honoured before the whole world by his art, it would seem that there was no place for him. To believers his name stood for rebellion ; to unbelievers it stood for weakness. He was now in a position to grasp the obscure meaning of a certain passage in the *Imitation of Christ*, a passage laden with eternal wisdom, wherein fame is described as but a handful of ashes.

I saw Fogazzaro at this time. He had gone to Oria for a short visit towards the middle of June, and had begged me to join him there. I recall the early morning hours spent in Franco's *loggia*, overlooking the lake, whose surface was ruffled by the quiverings of spring and wherein were reflected clusters of yellow roses hanging from the creeper that is entwined in the railings of the small, deserted garden. All Valsolda seemed to encompass the poet of *The Patriot* ; all Valsolda uttering a thousand words of consolation by means of its waters, its breezes, its trees and clouds. From every corner of the lovely land came an exhortation to peace. But no smile played upon the poet's lips. In memory I still see his sad face standing out against the luminous background of the landscape that lay laughing in the sunshine, and palpitating with new life. For the first time I saw that face darkened by shadows reflected from within, as when night is beginning to fall. His hair seemed to have grown whiter during the storm, and the lines that thought had furrowed on his brow appeared to have deepened. Wounded and exhausted, he had come to the land of his childhood in search of rest ; to the land where his soul had first opened to poetry ; where he had received the first revelation of the divine in Nature. On a certain day he had cast off the valley's fascination, crying : "Among my fellow-men !" Now he was returned from amongst men to the valley that had given birth to his dreams, that he might again listen to the mysterious voice that murmurs in the green and azure bosom of Valsolda. And once again the voice spoke to him by means of things reborn, *nihil, sine voce*, but this time in altered tones. With promises that were mysterious and gently melancholy, it exhorted him to return to the sweet land, to the little house, to the garden. It enticed him with the curve

of the lake-shore with its silver olives and crowning vineyards ; it enticed him with the flower-strewn enclosure where Ombretta lies at rest, but, not as a place wherin to dream, but to sleep. And on that day, as in response to the spirit voice, he confessed that he was tempted to give up, to relinquish everything, to resign from the Senate, to restore the decorations he held to his Sovereign, and in the words of Chateaubriand, remain *tout nu comme un pauvre petit St. Jean* ! But a voice far stronger than that of the spirit of Valsolda shouted its command to him : " Among thy fellow-men ! " and he must obey. Old and weary as he was, once more his inexorable conscience admonished him, warning him that " life must be lived to the very end," that he must carry on the struggle until he had drawn his dying breath. The Knight of the Holy Spirit withstood the temptation to rest before his appointed time, and once more set forth on his way.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE MESSAGE OF DON GIUSEPPE FLORES

To Fogazzaro both action and literary composition were indispensable. After the battle his answer to those who said to him "peace," was: "peace indeed. . . . Peace in the Holy Spirit that does not bind our tongues to silence, but encompasses our souls with fire, the fire of truth and of charity, whose every spark is sacred" (Letter to Monsignor Bonomelli, June 1906). His whole soul was in these words, his believing, eager soul of which a mighty longing to resume the struggle had again taken possession.

Two circumstances combined to increase this longing, namely, the incredible violence of clerical diatribes on the one hand, and on the other an invitation from the École des Hautes Études Sociales at Paris to lecture upon "the views and doctrines of Giovanni Selva." His act of submission had but rendered the sectarian Press of clericalism still more insolent, and so violent were the attacks from that quarter that Fogazzaro could not long remain silent and abstain from seeking to explain his views to "honest Catholics."

But what most greatly incensed Fogazzaro and finally induced him to break his silence was a certain libellous attack which epitomized the mode of thought of the non-concessionists and the methods adopted by them in combating him.

"In France Father James Forbes, a Jesuit, has published an essay on *The Saint* which is an amazing tissue of misrepresentations. He asserts that Benedetto died without the sacraments; that he would, indeed, have had them abolished, together with the visible Church, the ritual and every form of prayer save that which is of the spirit. He attributes to Benedetto himself the most advanced views expressed in the letter addressed to him by the band of young men who are tempted to sever their

connection with the Church, and declares that I myself am an avowed enemy of Catholicism. De Vogûë has published a magnificent confutation of his assertions in the *Figaro*, but what a distorted sense of religion must a priest possess who can lie like this for love of God!" (Letter to Monsignor Bonomelli, July 1906).

Under the circumstances, therefore, Fogazzaro could but welcome the opportunity for declaring his true attitude with regard to Giovanni Selva's views.

The lecture entitled *The Views of Giovanni Selva* was delivered on January 18, 1907, at the École des Hautes Études Sociales before a very numerous audience composed mainly of thinkers, literati, churchmen and society women. The address, couched in terms of the greatest moderation, but breathing all the fervour of honest conviction, was but a synopsis of the views which Antonio Fogazzaro had always professed.

On the eve of the struggle against modernism he openly confirmed his devotion to the Church and his ideals as a liberal Catholic, and this with a frankness so ingenuous as to appear insincere to those already prejudiced against him. He declared that the spirit of renewal by which he was animated was capable of adapting itself to all those forms of activity that are consistent with Catholicism, but that he was not, would never be, a "modernist." He detested both the name and the thing itself. He was more than satisfied to be merely "modern," and even modernity he would accept only with reservations. The lecture certainly did not mark an advance along the path that was already leading many towards separation. Without insisting upon those points that had offended the most orthodox traditions, Fogazzaro reviewed the opinions set forth in *The Saint*, explaining them with the utmost skill. His faith was still that of the Saint, namely, that "the future will see the Church marvellously rejuvenated," and that the current to which he belonged was "destined to contribute to this rejuvenation by means of a more or less abundant infusion of vital forces." The address centred around two important points in connection with this current of religious thought, namely, those concerning the Church and charity. As regards

the former, Fogazzaro laid stress upon the invisible element as being "the most real, the only element that counts." He had always held that besides the visible Church and her outward action, there was the mystic brotherhood of all believers in Christ extending beyond life itself and, in ways that are inscrutable, becoming merged in the invisible Church. What is darkly set forth in the Bible concerning the position of Melchizedek, had long exalted his Catholic sentiment.

As early as 1886 Fogazzaro had written: "That mystery seems to me greatly to broaden the field of our faith; it is like a loop-hole through which we may obtain a glimpse of the invisible Church that towers above our own as the King of Salem towered above Abram." He now turned to this higher Church as to a mighty refuge, declaring that "if the affection of progressive Catholics for their Church be not diminished by the bitter suffering she often causes them and the sacrifices she demands of them, this is solely because they are always *sure of a safe refuge in the invisible regions* where, by virtue of their living faith and undying hope, they feel themselves to be members in a brotherhood of which *the Almighty alone knows the extent*; a brotherhood invulnerable to all persecution, and from which, in all eternity, no one on earth can separate them, no matter what his power may be. This was the same faith that had inspired Savonarola when, to Alexander VI., who had excommunicated him, he declared that he might, indeed, exclude him from the Church militant, but not from the Church triumphant. It was a mystic faith which in Fogazzaro harmonized perfectly with his profound respect for discipline and the established order, but which was destined soon to be used abusively by the modernists, to whom this leap into the invisible often served as an excuse for disregarding those real difficulties which must be faced in the present, or for avoiding the stringent logic of their adversaries.

The other point he especially emphasized was the superiority of charity in the religious life. He returned to the fundamental concept contained in *The Saint*, that religion is above all things *action and life*, and that the superiority of the beliefs of the Catholic Church "can be demonstrated only by the evident

superiority of her moral action." He was more firmly convinced than ever that religious renewal must be based upon Christian pragmatism as contained in the Gospel words, *a fructibus corum cognoscetis eos*, and applied to human beliefs both religious and non-religious. (Letter to Monsignor Bonomelli, Vicenza, June 1, 1906.) Active charity and that love which reveals itself in fraternal actions are the surest marks of Catholic truth, and he would have had its light shine ever more brightly in the Church to bring conviction to wanderers in outer darkness. It is beyond doubt that in opposition to the conflicting currents of the moment, Fogazzaro confirmed the fact of his gradual estrangement from the intellectuals and from those whose attitude was one of criticism; confirmed the fact that he was ranging himself on the side of those who looked for salvation only through a renewal of the evangelical spirit. He doubted whether Loisy's influence would prove intrinsically reformatory, but at the same time he made no secret of his boundless devotion to George Tyrrell, "the man before whom all the Giovanni Selvas in the world must reverently bow the head," because he has known how to "kindle the fire of the love of Christ in so many icy hearts."

The Paris lecture, notwithstanding the faith that had inspired it, appeared in the light of a call to arms of all those forces that are opposed to the policy of the Vatican. The very manner in which it was organized helped to give it this appearance. There may, indeed, have been some who had their own reasons for surrounding Fogazzaro with the representatives of all those elements that were vaguely hostile to Pius x., thus making the occasion practically a review of such French forces as were antagonistic to the Vatican policy. Nor was Aristide Briand's cordiality towards Fogazzaro devoid of significance; and as for Paul Sabatier, he seemed determined to make him the "apostle of Gaul," such was his care that nothing should be wanting to give the lecture the solemnity of a great event and of a manifestation of international "modernism." This was not difficult to accomplish, thanks to the irritation against the Pope that was spreading throughout France at the time, and to the state of mind of certain bishops, one of whom, who was closely connected with the government, had actually written to the author of *The Saint* congratulat-

ing him in terms of great bitterness upon the condemnation of his book. It was thus that the most widely differing currents met and encompassed Fogazzaro at the École des Hautes Études. He was warmly welcomed by the leading men among the liberal Catholics, such as Thureau Dangin ; and Imbert de la Tour gave a memorable reception in his honour, at which a toast was drunk to "the fervent believer who, with incomparable loftiness of intellect, had known how to reconcile the bold and generous impulses and the freedom of the spirit with a faith that had led him but to pain and sacrifice. . . ."

Priests and laymen of all ranks participated in this supreme manifestation of progressive Catholicism, and Fogazzaro was able to say : " In Paris I lived in the world of *rational* Catholics, and the satisfaction I derived from such surroundings is indescribable ; I saw about me and received the applause of the flower of French Catholicism " (Letter to Monsignor Bonomelli, Vicenza, Feb. 3, 1907).

For a brief moment he cherished the illusion that he had triumphed, and the consciousness that his mission among the Gentiles had begun in the French capital.

Nor was the presence of Don Romolo Murri wanting to complete the prospect. He also had been put forward by Sabatier as another apostle of Italian modernism, and with Fogazzaro he was present at an assembly of the leading members of the French Protestant clergy. All this, however, resembled too closely the meeting at Subiaco, whose empty futility the author of *The Saint* had laid bare with all the insight of the artist. One has but to read M. Vionot's report in the *Revue Chrétienne* (April, 1911) to perceive how this conference had served to throw into relief a certain subtle casuistry which the condemnation had aroused in Fogazzaro, rather than that ardent thirst for true religion which was the enduring and dominating note of his character. Nor did the repetition of the lecture at Geneva in the presence of the *élite* of Calvin's city lead to any more satisfactory result. It neither affected nor convinced the Protestants, who deemed it over timid and inconclusive, and the repeated protestations of its author's Catholicism annoyed and astonished those who had come in the hope of listening to a " rebel." On the

other hand, it provided the clerical Press of Italy with a fresh excuse for suspicion and invective.

" You will probably read in the clerical papers that I dabbled in Protestantism at Geneva," Fogazzaro wrote to Bonomelli. " The truth is that my reiterated and earnest protestations of Catholicism only served to exasperate those Protestants, as the good missionary Dosio will tell you. But what else could one expect ? We must let this evil wind blow over. I will not argue with these wretched journalists. How could one possibly argue with people who print such rubbish as this : ' You, Fogazzaro, who would reform the Church, will but end as did *Lamennais*, *Lacordaire* and *Montalembert* ! '—This actually appeared in the *Berico* ! "

Fogazzaro's indignation was more than justified. His antagonists were all the more insufferable insomuch as their ignorance enhanced their aggressiveness. But the author of *The Saint* was not capable of justly appreciating the significance and importance this journey of his had assumed in the judgment of the general public—a judgment entirely at variance with the honesty of his purpose. The great success he had achieved in Paris was destined rather to weigh upon him as an error than to serve him as a justification. Once the applause had ceased to re-echo, it was the lay world rather than the clerical that condemned his appeal to the public opinion of Europe, in the name of Giovanni Selva.

Personally we do not condemn him, because our knowledge of his true purpose is too profound, but neither can we praise him. We simply judge by results ; and these lead us to the conclusion that, swayed by the impulsiveness of his impressionable temperament, he erred in yielding to the desire to justify himself in the eyes of the public. Unconsciously, perhaps, he was moved to deliver his lecture on Giovanni Selva's views by the desire to explain his own acts and thoughts, by the need to reveal to all men what he really was, in spite both of those who sought to represent him either as a rebel or as one dominated by authority.

There were other circumstances that helped to render Antonio Fogazzaro ever more suspect in the eyes of those in authority at the Vatican, where a plan was being matured for the suppression of the new currents in religious thought. A magazine had

been founded in Milan towards the end of the year 1906, its first number appearing early in the following year. It was edited by Aiace Alfieri, Alessandro Casati and Tommaso Gallarati-Scotti. Planned and compiled by men in the prime of life, its purpose was to awaken an interest in philosophical and religious problems in Italy, where these questions received less attention than elsewhere. It is neither possible nor fitting that I should sound the praises of a work with which I was personally connected, but it is a fact that it was not our intention to make this periodical a vehicle either for controversy or for any form of conspiracy. It was destined, nevertheless, to arouse the worst suspicions, and the foremost among these was that Antonio Fogazzaro was its chief promoter and dominating spirit. He began to be regarded as the person responsible for its foundation, whose identity had been concealed for reasons of prudence. The truth is, however, that Fogazzaro was at home in the atmosphere and in the current of thought that surrounded the group of men who had founded the *Rinnovamento*, and that the friendship existing between himself and several of the leading contributors to its columns caused him to follow its career with an anxiety and affection that were almost paternal. He furthermore held himself indirectly answerable for the responsibility its directors had incurred by adopting a certain line of action. But in reality the *Rinnovamento* was the outcome of the determination of those who had assumed all responsibility for it in their own names, and who would never have consented to be held in leading-strings by one who did not appear openly beside them. There existed, moreover, important differences between the intellectual attitude of the *Rinnovamento* and the programme of ecclesiastical reform set forth in *The Saint*; differences which gave rise to some amicable discussion which, however, left the directors of the review entirely free in their actions. But in the eyes of the ecclesiastical authorities the *Rinnovamento* represented a "rallying point" for reformers who were controlled by two or three prominent men, first and foremost amongst whom was the author of *The Saint*. To him was attributed the founding of the review, and this misdeed was deemed the more serious in that he was believed to be exercising his influence indirectly and in secret.

Another act for which he was severely censured was the institution of the *Lettura* (Lectures) to which Fogazzaro lent his name. Shortly before the appearance of *The Saint* he had declared to certain intimate friends that whatever profit he might realize therefrom would be devoted to some work whose purpose should correspond with the spirit of the book.

"My idea is to found a course of lectures, such as exist in England, for the diffusion of a higher religious culture," he wrote to von Hügel. "Three or four lectures would be delivered annually at one or other of the Italian universities, and then printed and freely circulated! The executive committee would be composed of Catholics, but lecturers belonging to other persuasions would be invited to speak, for there are many great philosophical and religious truths concerning which men who are not Catholics may speak with authority and to advantage."

In realizing this project Fogazzaro sought my help and that also of Senator Giacomo Barzellotti, of Professor Piero Giacosa and Professor Uberto Pestalozza. Senator Barzellotti was one of the first in Italy to sense—vaguely enough, perhaps, but nevertheless in opposition to the empty laicism of the university world of his day—the importance of religious problems and of their study. Piero Giacosa was one of Fogazzaro's closest friends, and it was with him that he had most frequently discussed and studied the problems of science. Although his opinions differed widely from Fogazzaro's, Giacosa had always been keenly interested in the loftiest problems of the spirit, and he was one of those men who, to quote an expression adopted by Fogazzaro in writing to von Hügel, "take their stand upon that boundary line of science which *faces the beyond*." It was therefore a matter of little difficulty to establish an understanding among the members of this first group with regard to the main principles upon which Fogazzaro proposed to found his lectures. Without confining their action to strictly confessional ground, they were intended to diffuse an interest in the study of religion. In a short address that preceded the opening lecture, which was delivered by Giacosa and contained a concise statement of his views, Fogazzaro made the following declaration:

" Certain opinions we hold in common concerning the problems of religion have united us in this undertaking. We do not pretend, however, that our religious beliefs are in every way identical in this respect, in fact, each is absolutely independent of the others ; but we all share the conviction that the problem is of supreme importance ; that indifference to religion is an attitude unworthy of a civilized people ; that indifference is a malady from which our country has long suffered, and that to seek a remedy for this is to fulfil an honourable obligation."

It was a satisfaction to him to reflect that this basic principle enjoyed the sanction of all the most advanced peoples both of Europe and of America, and he felt justified in "openly invoking a future that shall enlighten all hearts." His first plan was to make it possible for the leading representatives of the religious movement throughout Europe to come to Italy, and both Tyrrell and Loisy were consulted with this in view. But the ever-increasing difficulties by which Catholic writers were beset caused Fogazzaro to exclude from his programme all such lectures as might give rise to controversy on confessional points and to select a limited number "in the form of research concerning the relations existing between certain realities that are objects of scientific examination and that ultra-sensitiveness that is the fundamental element of all religious faith." Professor Piero Giacosa was invited to inaugurate the course, and in April he delivered three addresses on *The Biological Origins of Religious Consciousness*. These lectures, however, were denounced as dangerous by the bishops of Lombardy, and their purpose was wrongly interpreted. The main characteristic of the struggle being at that time inquisitorial persecution, a fresh endeavour was made to exclude Fogazzaro from participation in the life of the faithful.

In fact, when Holy Week was at hand, the monk to whom he was in the habit of appealing for absolution from his sins, wrote to him demanding the performance of an act of absolute submission, ignoring entirely the act of obedience he had performed in the preceding year, of which, indeed, the Sacred Congregation of the Index had taken no notice. Fogazzaro was nonplussed

by this fresh demand, but he at once perceived whither he was to be led ; and one high in authority having written to him that he "was under no obligation to do more than he has done already," he dispatched the following straightforward answer to the gentle monk, who was but the instrument of a higher power :

" . . . I have reflected, prayed and also taken counsel with others. The laws of the Church demanded of me obedience and respect. I gave more. I openly declared my intention to obey. Had the decree been communicated to me in the way in which it was to Laberthonnière I should have sent my declaration to the Congregation of the Index. As matters stood I published it in a newspaper. It has proved a source of great suffering to me. I was held up to scorn by the Freemasons, and I forfeited the regard of many friends ; meetings were held all over Italy to obtain my dismissal from the Supreme Council, and this dismissal was actually demanded of the Government in Parliament. I held my peace and continued to obey, as I always shall. This intention I confirmed again but yesterday in the columns of a Turin journal. If this is not sufficient to induce the Congregation of the Index to grant the *laudabiliter*, I am sorry, but I can go no farther. I cannot again submit to a martyrdom which would also be an outrage to my conscience. I must obey the dictates of my conscience. I believe I may honestly say that I am not swayed by reasons of pride, and that I harbour no resentment against those in authority."

No, neither pride nor resentment. The only sentiment by which he was swayed at that moment was the determination to resist any unjust exactions that might be put forward by the spirit of domination which he knew was already weighing heavily upon many souls. To yield to that spirit would be but to render its yoke more galling to many yet to come, and to repeat an act of submission would have been, not obedience, but servility.

Meanwhile, however, the Bishop of Vicenza, Monsignor Feruglio, had gone in person to the Convent of the Friars Minor to deprive the unhappy and bewildered confessor of the faculty of shriving Fogazzaro. But these demonstrations of hostility that were destined to embitter so many modernists and render them only more determined in their attitude of resistance, served

but to enhance the serenity and loftiness of one truly pious soul. By one party Antonio Fogazzaro was condemned as a rebel, while another—to which many modernists, both clerics and laymen, belonged—scorned him for his timidity; but, withdrawing ever more within himself, he was strengthened by the certainty that he was at peace with his conscience. The fact that many had forsaken him, that he was the victim of man's injustice, helped him to recede ever farther from the shore of time that rang with the clamour of discord.

The storm culminated in the *Encyclica* which is known in history by the title of *Pascendi Dominici gregis*. It bears the date of September 8, but it did not appear in the *Osservatore Romano* until the sixteenth of that month. Although its appearance was not unlooked for, the *Encyclica* was nevertheless destined to produce a great sensation, both because of the vastness of the movement it condemned, and of the unusual form that had been given to this particular pontifical document. A direct thrust at modernism, it was so subtly worded as to leave the victims no loophole for escape. It traced the origin of the new danger that threatened the Church “to her own veins and vitals,” for, according to the compilers of the *Encyclica*, the modernists’ method was “to lay the axe not to her branches and offshoots, but to her very roots; that is to say, to her most deeply embedded beliefs and fibres.” The theologians had therefore been at great pains to give an aspect of completeness to this “epitome of all heresies.” They had first sought to collect and classify “the disconnected and widespread doctrines,” and had then proceeded to point out the source of these errors and to dictate the measures necessary for preventing further evil results. In order that the methods of modernism might be systematically exposed, the compilers had examined it in all its aspects; for, in the words of the *Encyclica*, “every modernist stands for or rather is himself the embodiment of innumerable individuals—of the philosopher, the believer, the theologian, the historian, the critic, the apologist, the reformer; and those who would investigate the modernists’ methods and form a just conception of their principles and of the consequences to which their doctrines may

lead, must examine each of these parts carefully and separately." After an accurate examination, in the light of the most rigid scholastical theology, of all the material collected, the *Encyclica* endeavoured to trace to one dominating principle and system all the different manifestations of the religious philosophy of modernism, of its theology, history and mode of criticism, seeing in each the root of this complex religious movement. Atheism and pantheism were declared to be the natural results of a movement which seemed to the pontiff to lean, on one hand, towards rationalism and on the other towards a form of pseudo-mysticism; and all this mass of error, it was further declared, was the result of a state of mental aberration brought about by *curiosity* and *pride*. Remedies for this mighty evil were sought for in scholastical theology and in the application of a complex system of admonishments and acts of coercion, which ranged from the careful choosing of such rectors and teachers in seminaries and other Catholic institutions as were capable of probing the inner consciousness of their pupils, and of eliminating all such youthful aspirants to the priesthood as displayed an interest in anything that smacked of novelty "in matters historical, archaeological or biblical," to the founding in every diocese of a Council of Discipline whose mission it was to "watch most attentively for any indication of modernism either in text-books or among the teachers, and to enforce such prudent, firm and efficacious measures as may be deemed necessary for the safeguarding of the clergy and of youth."

The *Encyclica* was a source of deep sorrow to Fogazzaro, who could not but regard it as a mighty blow aimed at all he held most dear—at his friends and convictions. The spirit of persecution that emanated from its pages and was directed against men who were perhaps deserving of reproach but certainly not of hatred, aroused in him a righteous sense of indignation, and he recognized in the measures to be adopted against modernism some of those very "spirits of evil" which the Saint had denounced to the Pope. A dark era of espionage and denunciations was dawning which, to Fogazzaro's mind, constituted a greater evil than the errors against which its efforts were directed, insomuch as it was bound to awaken a sense of antipathy against the Church

throughout the world of freedom. He also realized the extent of the dangers embodied in a document wherein authority had assumed a purely negative position, closing against priest and layman alike every loophole for research and intellectual activity, and cutting them off from participation in the trend of modern thought, and this without suggesting any positive remedy save the one impossible one of a return to the past, of a return to scholasticism in philosophy and to the inquisition in practice. Throughout this time of trial, however, Fogazzaro was never anything but dispassionate in his judgments. Certain letters of his written after the publication of the *Encyclica* admirably illustrate his state of mind during this stormy period.

VICENZA, October 28, 1907.

MONSIGNORE AND REVERED FRIEND,—Your words always bring light and peace, and I am deeply grateful to you for having once more allowed their radiance to shine upon me. I am less affected by life's bitterness when I am conscious that my spirit is indeed turned towards God. At such times it afflicts me but for a brief moment. Its weight is soon lifted, and peace is again restored to me. You advise *silence*, and I am striving, shall always strive, to follow this advice in the sense you certainly attribute to it, which is a wise and holy sense. You must surely mean that it is not right either to contend in any way against those in authority, to complain publicly of any measure they may adopt against oneself or others, or to protest against such of their acts as may seem to us unjust. You cannot mean, however, that we are to refrain from serving God and Christ by the spoken word when such service does not imply a conflict with the Powers in the Church. In acknowledging that the majority of modernists lead pure lives, the recent *Encyclica* has made a great concession ; and to preach pure living (which comprises humility and charity as well) by word of mouth as well as by example, will constitute a righteous and wise line of defence for those who are the objects of persecution. In so doing they will be serving God, Christ and the Church in the best way possible, and they can avoid touching upon what has been and still is matter for discord in the Church herself. We are both aware that, as regards philosophy and theology, the modernists are far from agreeing among themselves, whereas with regards to morality and the importance they attribute to leading the evangelical life, they are perfectly agreed.

(Letter to Monsignor Bonomelli.)

ROME, November 4, 1907.

DEAR FRIEND,—At Molveno I acted the part of the unheeded Cassandra, for my advice was that the *Encyclica*, whatever its tenor might be, should be passed over in silence. The silent attitude was rendered more easy by the fact that modernist doctrines were therein falsely represented. Tyrrell did wrong to reply as he did, and the authors of the *Reply* made a mistake when they gave it that title. But I am well aware that it is useless to dwell upon what is past. What distresses me most is not the *severity* of the Vatican (if I may dare to call it so), but the profound indifference of the public in general. . . .

(Letter to T. G. S.)

VICENZA, December 11, 1907.—I wish to express to Your Eminence my profound gratitude for the precious gift of a copy of your address, and above all for the blessing that accompanied it. I was especially pleased with what you say of Newman and of that light that is the reflection of his soul, 'the light of an intellect *teeming with love*.' Newman's words, which you quote, express the deepest reverence for the Church, and admit that, in the future, the Church may come to interpret the dogmas somewhat differently than at the present moment, an admission which does not clash in any way with the writer's attitude of veneration. But Your Eminence must not conclude that I attach any great importance to this opinion of Newman's as a means of bringing into the Catholic fold persons to whom certain dogmas are repugnant. I welcome them only because they confirm me in my own opinion, which I have always held. As for winning souls, I assure Your Eminence that I have greater faith in the fulness of love than in the 'light of the intellect.' I hold that, their lack of learning notwithstanding, were the clergy more ardently imbued with the spirit of charity, not only Christians of the lower classes, but the cultured as well, would flock in great numbers to the fold. If the intellectual light be dim, acts of piety and a life beyond reproach will not suffice to enhance the authority of beliefs; that can be accomplished only by *ardent charity*. The faith of a Lodovico di Casoria affects the world more deeply than that of a Vito Fornari, although Fornari was deserving of all respect. O! Your Eminence, did this flame of charity but burn more brightly in the higher spheres; were persuasion and paternal exhortation but used before bitter reproach; were intellectual errors not always attributed to evil intentions; were there, in a word, any evidence of tender solicitude.

tude for those who have fallen into error, their numbers would surely diminish and thus also the necessity for excommunication ! I have nothing but blame for those who, having come under the ban, seek to argue with those in authority instead of accepting their decisions in silence, as is their duty ; who openly discuss the position in the Press or in public assemblies, thus provoking grave scandal. It being possible, however, that even the highest in authority may err in temporal matters and the spirit of charity be set aside ; it being admissible that children should, under certain circumstances and within certain limits, admonish a parent (albeit not publicly or even in the presence of witnesses), I could wish that those of his children whose opinions carry most weight should admonish the *Father* whenever such action appears manifestly necessary. Would not this be in harmony with the sacred traditions of Catholicism ? Does not veneration for the office often assume to-day the aspect of worship of the person who fills it. Were not Antonio Rosmini's oft-repeated protestations of unlimited respect for the *Holy See of the Roman Pontiff* evoked precisely by his just discrimination between the office and the person ? The errors that appertain to modernism contain, indeed, somewhat of arrogance ; but I nevertheless believe that they are generally the result of an overweening anxiety to minimize the supernatural element, not so much because of any especial aversion to it, as because of the desire to smooth the way for those who would fain enter the Church, but who shrink from accepting certain facts of a supernatural nature. Such a desire may, does indeed, lead to inadmissible concessions that cannot but be condemned, but it seems to me that the righteousness of their intentions entitles those who fall into error of this description to be treated with leniency.

If I have expressed myself too freely in writing thus to Your Eminence I can but apologize, and I kiss your hand. . . .

(Letter to Cardinal Capecelatro.)

VICENZA, December 27, 1907.—On rising this morning I opened my dear little English Bible at random and read the thirteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians—that grand page I have evoked in the “Message”—and I paused to meditate at the eighth verse. . . . It is mysterious indeed, but it clearly establishes the infinite supremacy of charity over science.

(Letter to T. G. S.)

Charity, life, action. These were the words oft repeated by Fogazzaro in those days. Amidst angry wranglings and reciprocal misunderstandings he was ever dominated by the thought of *The Saint*. He felt that, on both sides there was an appalling lack of charity, an attachment to intellectual schemes void of living faith, void of works. Not for this indeed, had he laboured and written. Not for this had he sought to hasten renewal in the Church. He, the mystic, heard amidst the many voices, one more earnest than all the rest, speaking out of the very depths of that Church from which no one would ever be able to tear him ; a voice of invitation summoning him towards that centre of divine peace which no *Encyclica* can trouble.

Out of the very heart of the religious world " where is perfect happiness," it spoke to him the word of eternal Catholicism. In accents in which he heard the echo of his earliest childhood, it cried to him : Remain !

Abandoned by the living, he took refuge in converse with his first teacher, Don Giuseppe Flores. He longed to repeat to the troubled, to the doubtful, his master's message, as he believed he heard it in the innermost recesses of his heart. With this end in view he faithfully transcribed that message, intending to publish it in the *Rinnovamento* as a solemn declaration of his own sentiments at that hour. But the placing of the review on the Index, determined him to withdraw his manuscript.

" It may be," he wrote to me, " that no opportunity for publishing it will ever occur during my lifetime. I will therefore deposit the manuscript in the archive you know of, and rest content that it be made public after my death, as the true expression of my most intimate thought, devoid of all compromise with my conscience, of all purpose of self-justification. I shall enclose it in an envelope bearing the inscription : ' To be consigned to T. G. S. on my death,' and you will use it as you may judge best " (Letter to T. G. S., Vicenza, December 27, 1907).

The hour is now come to break the seal and read the pages which he regarded as his spiritual testament.

DON GIUSEPPE FLORES' MESSAGE

He sleeps in the Lord, as all know who have read *The Saint*. In the little church which was his own and which he delighted to adorn, high above the main portal, with the light falling full upon it from the lofty side windows, his fine head, at once statu-esque and mystically thoughtful, has been immortalized in marble by a master-hand. His glance is directed upwards, but his face is turned towards the chancel, where beings he loved are wont to meet and worship, beings who regard his holy memory as a family treasure, a tower of strength, a never-ending benediction. It is as if, while assuring them that his love for them is still unchanged, he were admonishing them to raise themselves on the wings of hope and longing, high above the tide of ever-changing things, and soar towards that Immutability that is transcendent.

But more intimately still than through the marble does the soul of Don Giuseppe Flores commune with us amidst the shadows of night, when the bust is no longer visible, when the little church, its true proportions hidden from our perception, seems to expand, as we kneel there meditating upon the mysteries that surround death and the Creator; when, though we can no longer see him in the flesh, we picture him standing in the doorway of the sacristy, his noble countenance turned towards the altar. Wherever I may be, and at whatever hour of the day, I can always close my eyes and evoke that sacred, shadow-encompassed place, and feel his presence there. I am often moved to do this by my intense longing to know his judgment concerning things of the present, and to obtain his advice. But to feel his living presence near me, to feel him aglow with divine love and human affection as he was in life, is not to have entered into his thoughts. It is easy to deduce the judgments and counsels one longs to obtain from the principles he professed, from the general attitude of his mind, from opinions he may have expressed concerning vexed religious questions, from the quality of his faith and of his asceticism; but of the accuracy of such deductions there can be no certainty. His theological and philosophical knowledge, his holiness and his mystical communings with God are all elements that would enter into the formation of his judgments and counsels. To interpret his mind aright one must be his equal in piety and knowledge; it is for this reason, therefore, that I may not presume to formulate with perfect accuracy the message that Don Giuseppe Flores would convey to me to-day concerning certain grave questions which trouble but slightly the multitude of those who

pursue pleasure and the things of this world, or who, through sloth and timidity, shrink from meditating upon them. These questions, however, trouble profoundly the naturally religious, and such as stand hesitating upon the threshold of the Catholic faith, some uncertain whether to enter, others whether to turn back.

But the very effort of seeking for such a message from such a mind, though it may not lead to the desired result, nevertheless forces him who makes it to cast off his own intellectual and moral egoism, to divest himself of his passions, and attune his thoughts and mind, in so far as in him lies, to the lofty thoughts and mind he seeks to study. Then, as the action always determines the sentiment, so this effort of the will determines an inflection of the spirit that persists even after the will has ceased to bear upon it. Thus do great minds benefit, even after death, those who appeal to them, and it is for this that, in a supreme effort to project my spirit, to leave self as far behind as possible, my whole being turns towards Don Giuseppe Flores.

As I thus cleave to him, unspoken words form themselves in my heart. They are undoubtedly tinged with my own blood, with my own thought, with my own desire, because to none is it given to divest himself completely of self; but I am confident that, though they be spoken by me, all who loved Flores will recognize in them somewhat of his spirit, and it is this conviction that encourages me to voice them.

Even before the message has assumed a definite shape I am flooded with a sense of faith and love which soothes and exalts my spirit, and encompasses me with a vague aura of eternity, wherein my soul is conscious that it might find enduring peace were it but able to escape from the pains, the terrors, and strife of the world and dwell upon those heights. At the same time this vivifying contact with what is eternal, fills my spirit with a profound sense of its own nothingness, of the nothingness, as well, of every human being who has no part in such contact, no matter what his talents, his wisdom, his dignity, or his power may be. Things that in the past caused me much perturbation, now appear infinitely insignificant and petty. Meanwhile the message from the higher soul assumes a definite form, shaping itself in conformity with the aura out of which it has been evolved, and the message says :

“ Peace! Peace by purging the love of Truth of all impure alloy, of all self-love, of all egotistical tenderness for opinions that

are become as the flesh and blood of him who professes them because of their affinity with his own nature ; because they are in accordance with other ideas held by him ; because they have been acquired through long study or communicated to him by those high in authority ; because, through public expression of them, they are become almost a moral obligation, but which, nevertheless, still remain human and fallible. Contention with those in authority with a view to setting up a new theology in the place of the old, to separating historical truth from the truths of faith, and drawing attention to apparent inconsistencies in the Scriptures, gives rise to conflicts that might well lead to the downfall of the Church, should her authority succumb, and had we not the divine promise that this shall not come to pass. The authority of the Church must be upheld even at cost of the gravest sacrifices. It is sacred in its origin and a necessary factor in that great Union that stretches across time and space and is the true country of every Catholic soul. Those who imagine that this measure or that, imposed by the authority of the Church, is based upon material error and may therefore be attacked, should have a greater faith in what they hold to be material truth, and let them never doubt but that material truth will be revealed and triumph without their intervention ; for all truth is of God, and He needs no human aid. Let those who, while boldly standing forth against the enemies of Catholicism, nevertheless accuse the Head of the Catholic Church of depriving them of all the weapons of modern warfare and placing in their hands only such arms as the arquebus and pike, console themselves—if they can find no other source of consolation—with faith in the divine strength of the Church, which cannot fail to be made manifest ; let them remember the *Servi inutiles sumus* of Holy Writ, and rid themselves at least of the illusion that their intellectual weapons are of surpassing strength and efficacy in the defence of Catholicism or the conquest of indifferent and hostile souls. Any controversy that arises and centres around questions of religious philosophy and Biblical science leads easily to a distorted conception of Catholicism both in the minds of those with whom it originated and of the general public. It leads many to forget that Catholicism is essentially a rule of moral living combined with a *Credo* expressed in simple language, and with the practices of a ritual ; that it is based upon the authority of a Book it is impossible to subject to purely scientific criticism without causing suffering to those who are used to regard it as a source of divine light and consolation. To declare that henceforth the militant

Catholics' field of action in defending and glorifying their faith in the eyes of the world must be the moral field, is in no wise to minimize the importance either of the *Credo*, the Book or the ritual. The world cares but little whether a form of theology be ancient or modern, gives but little thought to the authors and commentators of Holy Writ, but it respects in those who profess religion, that faith which manifests itself in moral superiority ; it respects and honours such faith without seeking to trace its relation to modern thought. The world is Christian in so far at least, that it judges the tree by its fruits. The world has but a poor opinion of the Catholicism of those who, while professing themselves Catholics, assume a hostile attitude towards the Head of the Church, and discuss before unbelievers, acts of the most sacred nature performed by him as the Head of the Church ; and it has a poor opinion also of that Catholicism which manifests itself not as a religion of love and truth, but rather as one of bitterness and the dread of light. The world confuses Catholicism with superstition, falsely attributing to Catholicism the moral, civil, and economical decadence of certain nations which, while Catholic in name, are, in fact, merely superstitious. It includes in a common condemnation—and this justly—those who are guilty and those who tolerate guilt. The world does not expect the successors of the Apostles to be shining lights of wisdom, but it does expect them to set a high example of charity, and it glorifies among them both those who have set such an example in the past, and those who still continue to do so. The world hears much of Christ, and it wishes to see Him in those who talk of Him, as it saw Him but yesterday in Lodovico di Casoria and in Dom Bosco, as it sees Him in many missionaries who sacrifice everything for love of their fellow-men, and in many ecclesiasties both of high and low degree who have learnt of Christ to be meek and humble of heart, to admonish the erring in a spirit of love, to lay upon them a burden that is light and a yoke that does not gall. No matter how simple and credulous such ecclesiasties may be in matters of faith, no matter how ignorant concerning what is termed modern thought, nothing can possibly lessen the reverence with which the world regards them.

"A regiment of saints of this description could do more for the defence of Catholicism than ten regiments of ordinary men fighting with modern weapons in the field of thought. Let those to whom the Head has pointed out that not all things are good because they are modern, content themselves with those things that are good in all ages. Any work of criticism that threatens

to undermine the divine authority of the Gospels, should be carried out with the utmost circumspection, even though the Church may refrain from checking it, while certain sceptical interpretations of fundamental dogmas, which tend to trouble the minds of the faithful without in any way furthering the cause of pure Truth, should be carefully avoided, even though they be of a nature to escape condemnation by the ecclesiastical authorities. But the moral teachings of Christ may at all times be proclaimed in the open, in public places and from the housetops. Such teachings can never lead to conflicts with those in authority to whom every Catholic is bound to submit. There may indeed be those vested with authority who do not admire St. Francis, or at least do not entirely approve of him, but they will certainly never go the length of condemning him. A form of propaganda in the Franciscan spirit, but adapted to our era, might well be revived under the auspices of a new Innocent the Third. Such propaganda might also be carried into the field of art. There is much dissatisfaction with the Office of the Index and many demand that it be reformed, but those Catholics who yesterday suffered condemnation by it, or may suffer condemnation to-morrow, and who submit, as in duty bound, they being but insignificant atoms in the immortal organism of the Church, owe a debt of gratitude to the Sacred Congregation of the Index because it has discussed and respected Dante. The *Divine Comedy* stands as a monument to and a bulwark of Catholic liberty. Popes and cardinals, the Holy Office and the Index have definitely recognized in the light that shines in Dante a reflection of the Divine Fire. Throughout the centuries Dante has taught that acquiescence in dogma as formulated by the Church and obedience to the Holy See of the Roman Pontiff neither debar a layman, who, like himself, is one of God's prophets, from a lofty mission of evangelization or deprive him of the liberty to pass severe judgment upon those who, in the exercise of their ecclesiastical functions, depart from the spirit of the Gospels; nor is he forbidden most earnestly to adjure all such to obey the divine laws of God. It would be a grievous evil indeed should the respect due to such persons, *qui præsunt vobis in domino*, precisely because of the sacred character of the functions they exercise, degenerate into a habit of servile praise of all they do and say. But never since has there appeared on earth, and perhaps never will there again appear, a second Dante; one who, being himself a firm believer, was inspired by the faith that was in him, to speak with the divine authority of true genius. Nor, should a successor of Peter again

depart from the straight and narrow path in matters in which he is fallible, would there be found amongst you a Paul to admonish him with a like authoirty and bequeath to the Church the memory of the episode in the words : *in faciem ei restiti quia reprehensibilis erat.* Nor may any one amongst you assume such an office, or indulge in dantesque invective. Grave words spoken face to face, as a son might speak to his father, you may indeed utter, and also respectful remonstrance, as from a people to its prince ; and in a spirit of earnestness and sorrowful deprecation you may adjure those among the clergy who fail in their duty to set a good example and to cherish that faith which prepares the way for the saints whose purpose is pure charity. When you shall have manifested your submission to those laws which are intended to maintain the Catholic faith upon the highest pinnacles of thought, and preserve it from corruption at the hands of the arrogant, then indeed may you address to those who dwell in the moral and intellectual depths, admonitions calculated to preserve the purity of the Catholic faith from shameful corruption, from those errors into which the vulgar herd has fallen, to whom the fact of a passive, unreasoning submission, of a mechanical repetition of ritualistic devotions, of a purely formal respect for the laws of the Church, are a guarantee of salvation, and form, as it were, an excuse for many evil habits, and for that greed and slothfulness which Christ has condemned. Such superstitions have corrupted both public and private life in many Catholic countries and dishonoured Catholicism in the eyes of a protestant civilization that, judging the tree by its fruits, has condemned it as bad. Exhort the powers in the Church to help you against all superstitions by refusing to recognize them in any way. Use the power that is inherent in art to make manifest to the world the beauty and grandeur of those words of Scripture that set Charity above every virtue, even above Faith and Hope, exalting in that virtue a love without which the working of miracles and the dispensing of alms would be of no avail ; a love that renders the ruler meek and humble and the subiect docile and sincere, that abhors abuse and irony, suspicion, harshness and violence, that purifies more perfectly than fasting and flagellation, that seeks to hide in the shadow and, true to the teachings of Christ, delights in the humblest place at the common board ; a love which, did it but inflame the hearts of all the clergy as it inflames the hearts of a few, as it glowed in the hearts of the Saints, would, in a brief space of time, draw all men to Rome. Be humble, for love of the Church. If the world despise you for your humility, remind the world that

in civil, military, and political life it honours those who sacrifice their personal opinions to a supreme duty to their country. Make the world understand that it is thus honouring a virtue it despises in name only—humility—which, being neither servile nor cowardly, stands for abnegation and self-forgetfulness, for the heroic love of a whole that is incalculably more important, and of which humility itself is but an infinitesimal part.”

Such is, as I hear it, the message that comes to me in the little, shadow-encircled church, from the patriarch I venerate, from one who was all devotion to St. Augustine and to Antonio Rosmini, who, though richly endowed with worldly goods, cherished poverty in his heart, living, frugally, a life of prayer, of alms-giving, and of study ; practising the civic virtues and imparting Christian instruction to the young. I leave the little church, not without sadness indeed, but at peace. I come forth into the starlight, enter the garden he loved, and stand beneath the trees he planted with his unerring sense of the beautiful. From him comes secretly the impulse that prompts me to gaze upwards at the host of shining stars that illumine that infinite region which is the hope-inspired refuge of suffering humanity. They shine forth like beacons of a world of freedom promised as a reward after bitter strife.

CHAPTER XIX

THE END

MEANWHILE the shadows of evening were descending upon him. He had but a few more years to live—years of sadness and of pain.

A great silence had suddenly encompassed him which tried him more bitterly than all else, especially as this void was a sign of utter miscomprehension. He knew instinctively that he had come indeed to be regarded as a weak, timid, unstable being, and nothing could have caused him more profound humiliation, more pain that was almost physical. He looked to the future to vindicate him. “In this world the only impartial judges of our actions are those who are separated from us by time,” he wrote in a mood of intense depression . . . (Letter to T. G. S., Vicenza, 1908). But in the depths of his being the wound still bled. The modernists already regarded him as one whose course was run. The Vatican, considering his submission as merely a pretence, saw in him a dangerous traducer of the trusting faith of the pious. Even such friends as Monsignor Bonomelli were obliged to avoid mentioning him in their writings.

“How could I possibly feel aggrieved that you have not mentioned me,” he wrote to the good bishop, who had sent him his latest book. “I am confident that the time will come when it will no longer be unsafe to speak of me, and when men will admit that I also have done something for the faith and for the religious life. Then will that *truth* and *charity* triumph which Cardinal Ferrari recently championed so boldly, in language that, amidst this ever-spreading flood of false accusations and unjust suspicions, has been as balm to my spirit, has made me realize what Catholicism might be if all her shepherds would but speak out thus. Truth and Charity! Let the pastors stigmatize with a holy daring those incriminations and acts of espionage that are now so prevalent, as indeed they have ever been during

periods of political despotism. I, who am neither an agnostic nor an immanentist, but a follower of Rosmini; I, the poet, conscious of God in the universe, ask myself whether this espionage, these incriminations, this mania for discovering heretics and heresies everywhere and in everything, be not far more fatal to the religious life than certain systems of philosophy that but few understand, that I am willing to acknowledge are mistaken but do not prevent one from believing in God with all one's heart and soul; in God who will surely not inquire by what proofs we have been led to believe in Him, but only whether we have truly believed, perhaps even without any actual knowledge of traditional proofs. The present attitude of inquisitorial and rigorous discipline terrifies me because of the danger it entails of estranging the loftiest intellects from the Church, as well as of debasing character. But I console myself with the thought that in the immortal life of the Church the present is but a fleeting instant which posterity will regard with the glance of 'one who turns to the water,' etc. . . ."¹ (Letter to Monsignor Bonomelli, Vicenza, March 9, 1908.)

While the Church government pursued its policy of persecution with ever-increasing severity, Antonio Fogazzaro was greatly distressed to see how easily those in whom he had centred his highest hopes were relinquishing the positions they had assumed. He realized that the faith for which he himself had fought no longer burned within them. Those whom he had accounted the most able apologists of Catholicism were forsaking their posts and surrendering their arms to their enemies of yesterday. At the first blow many who had prated loudly of the Church revealed the secret of their defection from her.

The case of Loisy in particular aroused in him a sense of bewildered discouragement, and forced him to subject his past enthusiasms and his own position in the Church to fresh examination. Loisy who, immediately after the appearance of the *Pascendi* Encyclica had protested in writing against the false interpretations placed upon opinions attributed to him, published, towards the end of January, his commentary on the Synoptists, *Les évangiles synoptiques*, and the little volume entitled *simples réflexions sur le décret, Lamentabili sane exitu,*

¹ Dante, *Inferno*.

et sur l'encyclique, Pascendi dominici gregis, wherein the fact of his inner detachment from Catholic tradition was plainly manifest. Fogazzaro was far more deeply impressed by this revelation of inner detachment than by the official excommunication. A letter to Monsignor Bonomelli written at this time, contains the following passages :

“ Loisy is undoubtedly a man of great genius, but I doubt whether it can be said of him that he is fully imbued with that sentiment with regard to Christ which forces us to believe in Him. I feel it can hardly be that the intellect which produced that rigorously scientific vivisection of the Gospels is accompanied by a pious spirit, a spirit zealous for Christ. I am firmly convinced that if persecution and condemnation had not been resorted to in the beginning, if Loisy had been dealt with in that spirit of charity which is the first duty of those who govern in Christ’s name, and with that prudence of which Leo XIII. set the example, he might have been saved to the Church. Rome and certain French bishops, however, elected to pursue a different course. Posterity will be free to pass open judgment upon the acts of those who are in authority to-day. But it cannot be denied that Loisy has cut himself off from all communion with the faithful, not only, it seems to me, by his views with regard to Christ’s divinity, but also because, by treating the Gospels like any work of history, he has laid bare all that can be urged against the faith of the Evangelists themselves, and this without the excuse of having served truth, for although his arguments and the material he has collected may generate doubts concerning some most vital points in the Gospel story, points that form the very foundation of the faith, they cannot, even to the mind of the author himself, prove them to be false. What then has he achieved ? This matter does not come within the domain of physical science, where it is already a great thing even to have shaken a false doctrine, for in that domain one can be sure that further research will demolish it entirely. What fresh light can possibly be shed upon the field of Loisy’s activities ? What new documents can be produced ? It is fortunate that the two volumes are ponderous and expensive. Were they condensed into one small, cheap volume, who can say how many pious souls, how many honestly devout souls, perceiving that the authority of the Gospels was shaken, would feel that the restraint placed upon their passions was relaxed ? I write this in answer to a

passage in your last letter and that you may know my true opinion of Loisy. I regret that Tyrrell should have yielded to the temptation of resentment, and I trust that his strength may be renewed to conquer it ; but how widely he differs from Loisy ! How deep is his feeling for Christ and how much good his writings may do ! Who would dare to maintain that his work is free from error ? Certainly no one. Nevertheless my heart bleeds to see him torn to pieces by journalists as well as by others who are incomparably inferior to him, and who, taking a passage here and another there, would discover heresy even in the works of St. Augustine and of St. Thomas themselves, were they writing to-day" (Letter to Monsignor Bonomelli, Vicenza, April 1, 1908).

Henceforth Fogazzaro felt that he had nothing in common with Loisy, and he hoped that Tyrrell also would rebel against this "microscope method." He was becoming more and more firmly convinced that "the great fundamental principles of truth escape detection by this method of research" (Letter to T. G. S., Vicenza, March 22, 1908). Meanwhile he could but deplore the fact that the defection of great intellects was troubling lesser ones, and that the struggle was engendering a state of confusion which prevented them from obtaining a clear view of their own position and duty, in the minds of many who came to him for advice, and to whom the religious movement to which he belonged had brought enlightenment and fervour.

Day by day the radius of the crisis was spreading and the silent exodus was assuming alarming proportions. In vain Fogazzaro sought to persuade those who still hesitated to remain within the fold, not for reasons of opportunism, but in the hope of what must "infallibly" come after Pius x.—"a reaction in the right direction."

"I feel," he wrote to me at this time, "that the word of a Pope, the word that is evangelical, charitable and firm in belief, still possesses an immense power over all ! But should Pius x. be succeeded by one capable of uttering such a word, how could he recall those who had deliberately placed themselves beyond the pale, and who, meanwhile, had been steadily increasing the distance that separates them from the Church ? It would be a difficult undertaking ; and their secession, moreover, means so much energy dispersed" (Letter to T. G. S., March 27, 1908).

But Fogazzaro's conception of an attitude of reasonable, expectant and silent obsequiousness might well appear inspired by cowardice. Many at that time felt the spirit of propheey stirring within them and believed themselves called to fulfil an important mission in the Church. They may perhaps have come to realize to-day how difficult it is to be a true prophet, an apostle, a martyr or even a heretic. But that was the hour of rebellion and of crises. Fogazzaro felt that each individual must be left to earn his own bitter experience, and that he himself must stand aside like the servant who, having done his day's work, is no longer needed.

It was at this time that the silence wherein he had sought refuge was broken by the murmurings of his poetic vein. The refreshing waters of song once more bubbled forth in the barren desert that surrounded him. Amidst all these theological wranglings and this display of clerical wrath wherein he saw but the baseness of a struggle that was bitter indeed and lacking in the true spirit of religion, he discovered that his first vocation had not been stifled. Once again he was a poet, and sang his last songs. For a time, indeed, he believed that this fresh poetic fervour had definitely weaned him from all work in prose, such was the strength of the fascination exercised over him by verse.

The truth is that he put his whole soul into these songs, poured out in them all the fulness of his weary heart, all the prayers which those who had once been his followers were no longer able to listen to with understanding.

With a frankness that finds expression in outbursts of despairing sadness the *Canto dell' angoscia e dell' orgoglio* (The Song of Anguish and of Pride) reveals a painful aspect of Fogazzaro's psychological state at that time. Circumstances had combined to cause him to view death "not in the light in which I should and gladly would see it," he wrote, "not as I strive to regard it when not swayed by outward influences," but in a manner that cast him down utterly. "*The Song of Anguish and of Pride*, dedicated to the 'veiled Demeter,' has but strengthened the fetters that bind me, perhaps because, in a way, it is so closely connected with my own sad thoughts" (Letter to T. G. S.,

April 7, 1908). In these verses that teem with the defiance of despair, it was of death the deliverer, of death that is forgetfulness of all things, that is oblivion—and the merging of self in a life far removed from that of man, that Fogazzaro sang. It was not a Christian poem, for it was pervaded by a spirit of despair which is not derived from faith. It was the poem of an hour of darkness and temptation, and this spiritual state is therein described with all the power wherewith Fogazzaro had always been able to describe the darker side of his inner world, as in *Notte di Passione*. Here, however, the temptation is of a different nature. It is not of the flesh but of the spirit, and precisely because of this it is the more violent.

Fogazzaro realized this fact and was filled with remorse. Not thus, indeed, did he wish to look upon death and the infinite! Not thus did he wish to envisage his own slow severance from things and men, regarding it as banishment, his heart full of bitterness and encompassed by a great silence and gloom. "I hope to spend but a few hours in Rome," he wrote to me at this time, "and then be able to pass a day or two in some solitary place where I can think out a 'Song of Humbleness' to set over against the other" (Letter to T. G. S., April 7, 1908). This song, in fact, welled up from the depths of his being soon afterwards during an hour of recollection spent in the cathedral at Milan where, ever since the days of his troubled, restless youth, he had so often prayed. In the great church filled with shadows, the deep-seated vein of mysticism once more began to flow, pouring itself out in prayer and bitter tears. Encompassed by the cloistral melancholy of the National Museum (Rome), where the ruins of a world that is dead are eloquent of the slow passing of all things, Fogazzaro had been keenly alive to the fact of his own passing into the void of a vast silence where God is not. Here, on the other hand, the consciousness of death's proximity found expression in a prayer that is all humility. Mystery became illumined by the light of Christ. The poet's heart yearned towards another heart that is both human and divine, that throbs in the vastness of shadowy space, and he longed for the support of two outstretched, invisible arms into whose embrace he flung himself with a sense of hope that was half fear.

But seldom had Fogazzaro experienced a deeper emotion or rendered it in a purer form than in this song of farewell to life, which contains the confession of his moral and physical misery, and wherein he pours out the revelation of his "thirst for the Lord," giving himself up utterly, "harassed spirit and weary flesh." We realize that by means of this self-surrender he had retrieved all that was best in himself, not only as a man but also as a poet; for herein he touches the very roots of his mystic sentiment, touches that "living current" of perennial inspiration whose appeal he had all too often disregarded during the years of controversy. This song shows us the victory of the mystic over the modernist. In fact, in a letter that accompanied the *Canto dell' umiltà* which he sent to me in Palestine where I was at the time, Fogazzaro expressed himself as follows:

"I have always felt that if we can once reach the vitals of our faith, of our Church, all that happens on the surface loses its importance. It was this idea that inspired the exclamation I put into Benedetto's mouth at the meeting in Via delle Vite: 'When you are truly united to Christ are you troubled about the decrees of the Holy Office?'" (Letter to T. G. S., May 22, 1908).

Meanwhile Fogazzaro's new novel was maturing in his mind. This was *Leila*, the work which was destined to be his last and to mark the close both of his life and of his literary labours.

In order to form an accurate conception of this work, which was so coldly received by the public and so severely handled by critics, it is necessary to examine its intricate origin. It was the outcome of an intellectual anomaly, and of this anomaly that generated it, it bears the dissentient marks.

The dominating note in *Leila* is the fact that herein Fogazzaro emancipates himself from the world of theological polemics and of ecclesiastical condemnations, and comes into his own again as an artist. The inspiration of this novel is the final triumph of the poet of the "eternal feminine," at a moment wherein the sense of the failure of his religious mission was most acute in him. We have already examined the outward aspect of his attitude towards the Church. He had accepted the condemnation of *The Saint* with the Catholic's sense of discipline, and his

obedience had been unfeigned, not merely an empty form. But the temperament of a poet is dominated by certain invincible powers, certain forms of energy that are stronger and more subtle than his will itself, and that it is impossible for him to overcome and stifle. In Fogazzaro these elements rebelled against the complete relinquishment of his artistic activity ; they pointed out and opened up a way which seemed to him both free and untroubled ; they recalled him to his primitive instincts, to his true vocation as the poet of love, the poet of nature. At last his eyes beheld again God's own great world in its all-encompassing vastness, a world wherein exist not only theologians and Roman congregations, critics and sacred writings, modernists and syllabi, saints and complete renunciation, but woman also, and love and marriage, the sweetness of normal affections, of serene faith, of unforbidden earthly delights. Leila, that youthful, ardent and peculiar being, who was no phantom but his last strange encounter with the feminine upon life's way, shone, in his eyes, with this new light wherein once more he saw all life freed from the torturing problems of his intellect. She advanced to meet him, not as Elena and Jeanne had done, neither as Beatrice nor as a temptress, but as she who was to preside at the return of his art from celestial regions to this earthly sphere. She was not the offspring of a theory, this fair-haired fascinating maiden, created to savour the joys of a union with her natural mate. That she was the offspring of a living reality more than one passage clearly demonstrates. Fogazzaro the man had discovered her indeed, but Fogazzaro the artist had transformed her moral and physical characteristics in accordance with his own experience in that hour, thus making of her a symbol, as it were, of his own soul that yearned for the freedom of the realms of poetry. In the most unusual acts of this strange creature who will suffer no yoke save that of love ; in those episodes wherein she reverts to the earth, the grasses and the waters as though athirst of life itself, there is reflected a state of mind more exalted than the heroine's own, and that becomes merged completely in the spirit by which the poet is inspired. The most ardent pages, the episodes descriptive of the most passionate abandonment to nature (those passages that appear almost incompatible

with the age of the author, who displays therein a sudden renewal of youthful vigour, of imagination and power of expression), contain more than the simple, objective story of outward acts performed by Massimo's betrothed; they contain the lyrical outpourings of the very soul of the poet of *Malombra* once more descended to earth. He himself is not fully conscious of it, but it is nevertheless a fact that, when Leila casts her garments aside in the seclusion of the magnificent park at Velo, that lies shadowy and palpitating in the moonlight, and gives herself up to the embrace of pure and icy waters; when she seeks eternal rest, by allowing herself to be suffocated by the perfume of flowers; when she unbinds her magnificent tresses above the mirror formed by the lonely mountain stream in Valsolda, Fogazzaro is not only describing, but is, in a way, actually participating. It is his art itself—fancy and sensibility alike—that for a moment revels in this poem of life and of shadow, that through sunshine and storm, pursues this passion-driven maid, following her in her flight through regions he has loved, through the forests where he has dreamed, past the tiny pools that adorn his garden, and along the banks of mountain streams.

In his pursuit of this last personification of youth, in the sense of exaltation with which he lavished upon her all the treasures of his own dreams of which he is not yet weary, we see the flashing of a supreme temptation, a temptation not of the flesh like those of old, but one more subtle and in some dark way connected with that contained in the song of the *Veiled Demeter*—a longing for forgetfulness amidst the rich currents of human and terrestrial life.

Fogazzaro had recently built himself a villa called *La Montanina*, among the century-old chestnuts, the streams and meadows of Velo. This construction, raised upon the borderline of his world of romance, also bore the sign of the return of his soul. Leila and *La Montanina* came into being almost simultaneously. The house and the woman were in keeping—both were pervaded by the same spirit. These concessions to a more human sense of art and of life, to what they esteemed a deviation from the ascetic austerity of reform, were condemned alike by the poet's followers and by severer critics. But Fogazzaro

zaro protested that the reformer is not the only being who exists in the world of Christianity ; that there is room for the artist as well, whose rights of citizenship are incontestable ; and that Christianity comprehends not only virtue but beauty, not only sacrifice but the temperate and spiritual enjoyment of creation. His aim now was to speak, not as the teacher, but with the calm accents of a brother man. Looking backward he may have felt remorse for having failed to point out any other than the most difficult, the rarest solution of the problem of life. He would now fain bring his characters back to a broad and safe path, and he could discover no better one than the smooth way of the deep and common affections that centre in the family and the home. He realized that he could not end his labours more worthily than by extricating the beings of his creation from entanglements and torment, and by pointing out to them the path that is most easy.

Leila, however, was not engendered by this spontaneous poetical reaction alone. She also reflects the mystical reaction and the effort to realize peace in religion which is in keeping with the spiritual attitude Fogazzaro has established in the *Message of Don Giuseppe Flores*.

There was much talk of retraction when *Leila* appeared. The word generally conveys a sense of timid and formal denial of positions and ideas once held but not maintained, and in this sense it served to bias the judgment of certain critics, and lent the work a distasteful character of cautious ambiguity. The fact cannot be concealed, however, that the trend of the book shows detachment from *The Saint*, a detachment brought about not by external and opportunistical action, but by an inner rebellion against certain modernist doctrines and attitudes. From the religious point of view *Leila* is not the return to the fold of a frightened spirit ; rather is it the fruit of a solemn and painful experience which is struggling to utter a last word with art as its vehicle of expression. Fogazzaro had been strongly impressed by two facts which had given him much matter for thought, namely, the facility with which detachment from the external forms, from visible communion with the Church, leads to a rapid, inner dissolution of all Christian experience, and the sterility

of a movement which is based mainly on critical, intellectual and negative elements. He had hoped that modernism would act as a powerful lever to uplift and extend a purified Catholicism in modern society ; but facts showed him every day more clearly that pride of intellect and barrenness of heart were gradually transforming the movement into one of secession, wherein the spirit shrinks within itself, makes a stronghold of opposition, impoverishes itself in bitter disputes concerning the letter, and gradually detaches itself, more or less unconsciously, from the living body of the millennial Church, only to found ineffectual schisms whose tenets are incapable of renewing the heart of man, whence alone a profound religious revulsion can derive. In view of the attitude he saw assumed by many upon whom condemnation had fallen, he could no longer perceive what justification there was for maintaining that the modernists were any nearer than their opponents to the true spirit of the Church and of the Gospels, or by what right they could pretend to represent the great current of mysticism as opposed to theologism, after having shown themselves so much more strongly attached to their own rational interpretations of dogma than to its religious substance.

Saddened by this deception, Fogazzaro once more turned to his past, to the grand traditions of which he was the offspring, and again gave his mind to the teachings of his youth. He thought of his masters and his kindred, who had been liberal Catholics. Their strength had resided in the fact that they did not discuss the fundamental principles of Christianity, but lived it in its entirety. In these exemplary Christians who were now assuming predominance in his thoughts, he again saw that true union between belief and action without which Christianity is but an empty sequence of words. He had come to fear words—to dread the sound of their re-echoing in the cavernous void—as we all instinctively mistrust such utterances as are of the lips only. Instead of criticizing the doctrines of modernism—a thing he never attempted—he criticized the modernists themselves by comparative methods. Not that this ever influenced him in favour of the anti-modernists. He would never have tolerated that any word or act of his should weigh in the balance in favour of reaction. He still sympathized with modernism's boldly

critical attitude towards *Pharisaism*, or, in other words, towards that mask of orthodoxy behind which the substance of things experienced and aspired to, does not exist. But his sentiments, his language, his mental and moral habits, were all derived from the spiritual life of the stock from which he had sprung, and this fact he was now beginning to realize. He had encountered modernism on his way, accepting it too lightly, perhaps ; he had discovered certain points of contact with it, which he had perhaps failed to examine closely enough ; he had assimilated something of it—too readily and easily, perhaps ; but a fusion and complete intermingling of souls there had never been. Now that the time was come when every conscience must be subjected to a rigorous examination in order to decide what path to follow in the future ; now that the approach of death imposed the fullest of confessions, he felt himself once more gravitating (in the very persistence of his spirit of resistance against ecclesiasticism and Pharisaism) towards his natural centre of attraction. He cast aside all ties of a dubious nature in order that he might return to the company of the true authors of his inspiration, to the company of his true guides, to those who belonged to the school in which he had been educated ; and by their means he aimed at reaching a still more sacred current, at returning to the examples set by the greatest Catholics, at scaling the heights that tower above all disputations — the heights of eternal Catholicism as, girt about with poetry, they are vaguely outlined in the *Divine Comedy* and in the *Pentecost*.

The whole religious side of the novel is the result of this spiritual attitude of its author, and its meaning, therefore, is far other than that of an opportune withdrawal from modernism for the purpose of avoiding future condemnations and of obtaining remission of sentences already pronounced.

He did not wish to deny in any way what there was of truly religious in the movement to which he had belonged, but henceforth the word modernism meant much to him from which he felt far removed. His new novel was intended to mark his separation from the modernists, and in it the attitude towards the Church which he had assumed of his own free will after the condemnation of *The Saint* was adequately maintained. In this attitude he felt

sure of himself—so sure, indeed, that even a fresh condemnation would not have disturbed his equanimity. Thus he was able to write to Monsignor Bonomelli :

“ I am glad you endorse my opinion with regard to Tyrrell’s letter to the General of the Jesuits. It is a very monument ! On page 225 you will find a most important quotation from St. Augustine. (The writer has made the mistake of not stating from whom he is quoting.) Do you know the passage ? As regards my new novel—of course nothing is impossible, but it seems to me that a fresh condemnation would be entirely unjustifiable. . . . It is true the book contains two characters who are priests of the type that now predominates in the government of the Church, but the finest characters are possessed of *la foi du charbonnier*, and the one modernist is seen to lose his faith entirely. Of Benedetto it is said only that he may have fallen into error ; that Church authority was justified in repudiating certain of his doctrines ; that had he been condemned, he would certainly have set an example of obedience, scorning the world’s censure. In short, if this book of mine is placed upon the Index I shall find myself in a condition similar to that described in the quotation from St. Augustine to which I have alluded above ” (Letter to Monsignor Bonomelli, August 19, 1910).

Intentions, however, are not always successfully carried out in works of art, and this book, wherewith the author had hoped to surpass *The Saint*, became in reality but a polemical continuation of that work. Seeking consolation for the spectacle offered by the Church of his day, Fogazzaro had been forced to turn in spirit towards the heights and penetrate the depth of eternal Catholicism. /He was successful in creating certain devout characters who will never be forgotten ; characters such as Don Aurelio and Donna Fedele, capable of pointing the way to the Christian experience that emancipates. /But the contemplation of these exalted beings did not suffice to render him oblivious to the narrowness and bitterness of the world that encompassed him, and above which he had sought to uplift them. He had striven to compose a work of pacification wherein his spirit might bask in the broad serenity of a religious sentiment so profound as to have remained unscathed by the controversies

that had tormented him. But the trouble was that he had been surrounded by too many priests, journalists and slanderers, who had vied with each other in rending and insulting him, thus reminding him at every step of the bitterness through which he had passed, of the struggle in which he had participated. The contrast between his own ideal and the reality the sting of which he was constantly feeling, caused him to become what he had not been in *The Saint*, namely, the satirical delineator of the adverse clerical world. Once more his sense of humour was aroused, but although he himself was unconscious of this, his laugh had acquired much bitterness, and he was no longer able to view the world with that sense of ingenuous compassion with which he had regarded it while composing his masterpiece. Behind the figures of the arch-priest and Don Emanuele he saw that ecclesiasticism of which he had been the victim ; he saw the Vatican in miniature, and the Congregation of the Index ; and while the man in him felt the necessity to forgive, the artist was inclined to lacerate and the believer to denounce : justified in his own eyes by the thought that he was fighting hypocrisy, great artist that he was, he revenged himself upon his persecutors by describing them. He did not pause to reflect that sarcasm is a far more deadly weapon than invective, nor did he perceive that persons infinitely more exalted than a mere arch-priest and a curate would be the true victims of his irony. This tendency in the new book was obnoxious to many who were not believers. They felt that the work smacked subtly of revenge ; that it was an attempt at self-justification after submission, an act of resipiscence and of indecision with regard to the dictates of those in authority, an act performed in depreciation of previous submission to condemnation.

Fortunately, however, the heart of the book is not in that narrow ecclesiastical world of disputes and intrigue in describing which Fogazzaro relapses into resentment and misgivings. The heart is there where his spirit soars unfettered, rejoicing in the inspiration that uplifts it. More strongly than at any other point does the heart throb in the figure of Donna Fedele, through whom Fogazzaro frees himself from all disputes and controversy and, rising above satire, attains those pure summits of Christi-

anity which he describes to us with a renewed sense of emotion. Through her he succeeds in surpassing *The Saint*. Through this woman, who is so entirely feminine in the loftiness and purity of her life, who is neither a saint nor a reformer, but a firm and honest believer, the book delivers a message that is both new and exalted. The best aspect of Fogazzaro's faith is revealed in her ; for while *The Saint* was symbolical of his religious perturbation, *Donna Fedele* represents the stronger and more steadfast side of his Christian life. By encompassing her with a fascinating *aura* of human sympathy, Fogazzaro has glorified in her that element of perennial youth and beauty which was of the essence of his own faith, and which the majority of modernists failed to discover by means of unimpassioned and prying analysis.

The last female figure to dominate his pages, and whose portrayal brings his literary labours to a close, is therefore not *Leila*, but the "white lady of the *Villino delle Rose*," and the highest, most original and impressive poetry the book contains breathes not so much from the love-story of youth as from the story of the meeting between old age and death—death whose approach, in all the divine and joyous mystery of its peace-bringing mission of commencement, was foreseen by him who in our century and literature was certainly its greatest lover and poet.

The new novel failed to please. Rarely has a book, the appearance of which has been looked forward to with such keen interest, been so severely handled by critics.

In the eyes of the intransigents it was a mendacious reversion to the standpoint of *The Saint*. They maintained that Fogazzaro's submission after condemnation could have been but an act of hypocritical obsequiousness towards those in authority, if he now sought to justify Benedetto, glorifying him in death, albeit with certain reservations ; if he once more dared to stigmatize the shortcomings of the clergy, speaking a language that was not that of the devout believers who represented the reaction of theology against the new currents of mysticism. To such as these *Leila* was a diabolically insidious work, composed by one who professed an obsequiousness that was purely formal in order to avoid exclusion from the fold ; it was the work of a

time-server whose superior cunning and moderation rendered him far more dangerous than either Loisy or Murri, who had now gone their separate ways.

To the modernists, on the other hand, it appeared the work of one naturally timid who had allowed himself to be unmanned by a sentence of condemnation, and revealed the weakness and instability of a character which age had further enfeebled. In their eyes *Leila* was a blind recantation, a humiliating act of devotion to that same official Church the author of *The Saint* had scourged. In their opinion the two books were irreconcilably antagonistic.

Henceforth no merit was recognized in him, and he was condemned beyond appeal in the name of art, of morality, of language and of common sense. He was regarded as one whose career is at an end. For him also the hour of the *crucifige* had struck.

All artists have known that hour of moral agony when a voice is raised in the crowd that, without uttering the actual words, says plainly : "Thy work is done. Henceforth hold thy peace, that others may be heard." Above all the noise of this unexpected outburst of antagonism and anger Fogazzaro heard those words. His hour was past. His message had been delivered. Other tastes, other ideas, other interests were springing up around him. The wind had veered and with it the souls of men. Those who had inclined towards his own ideals, the new generation which had appeared to thrill with a renewal of religious ardour, were already widely separated from him. New doctrines had arisen that appealed to the young, who saw therein the means of tiding over, even of resolving, the crisis which modernism had occasioned within them. And from the summit of their philosophy they looked down with somewhat of contempt upon this venerable Catholic of the liberal school, regarding him as one who has been outstripped, as one no longer capable of influencing the trend of Catholic thought.

In the political world also he was forced to recognize that he occupied a place apart. He belonged to the school of those whose thoughts and actions had proved their love of country, but their way of loving her differed widely from that of the Nationalists. Fogazzaro's liberalism was imbued with a sense

of humanity and of Christian civilization that was but an antiquated form of romanticism to the adepts of the new idolatry that makes of the State a selfish divinity hostile to the rest of humanity. He was guilty of believing in the brotherhood of man, as those who had fought for our country's freedom had believed in it, from Mazzini downward. He was guilty of cherishing, as a sacred heritage, many beliefs that to-day are set aside as *abstractions*. He was the last Catholic of the romantic school, and around him the world was becoming ever more barren, more parched, more bitter, more realistic. Philosophy, denying the transcendent, was leading man back to man; politics, denying humanity, was leading nation back to nation. For Fogazzaro there was no longer any room in the world.

It was at this time that he really began to prepare to meet death. When the voices of men are hushed, the Voice of premonition speaks with greater solemnity. He had always borne the great Mystery in mind, but now Death became his constant companion. Both his letters and his conversation teemed with this sense of the end. Not with dread, but in exaltation of spirit did he contemplate life's crowning experience, which must surely now be near at hand. To him who believes in immortality as firmly as Fogazzaro did, this earthly feeling is but the dawning of a new day—is, above all else, the meeting face to face with the Invisible Pilot. Labouring in the secret recesses of his soul, he sought to render himself worthy of the hour wherein his eyes would finally behold the longed-for Light. There exists a note made privately by him in the preceding year, wherein he tells of vague presentiments of eternal youth flashing brightly forth amidst the encircling darkness of his ebbing life.

A NOTE

July 6, 1909.—Journeying one day between Thiene and Rochelette, beneath a grandly tempestuous sky, the conviction of my power to transform and regulate my inner life in such a manner as to create a second youth for myself, was borne in upon me more strongly and impressively than ever before. I concentrated my thoughts upon the future beyond the grave, compared with which my present life is but as a dot. I thought

of the superior faculties for appreciating beauty with which I shall be endowed—faculties which will develop out of those of which the germ is already within me. And when I reflected how many hours of ecstasy even these lesser faculties have afforded me here below, I was able to form a conception of that possible future state to reach which it is undoubtedly necessary that I centre all my thoughts upon it; that I detach my affections from this earthly state, albeit without neglecting it, but using it as a means of preparation for the future, and recognizing it as beautiful precisely because it prepares me for the future state. And in the contemplation of a fast-approaching life beyond this earthly sphere, my old age here becomes my youth.

As time went on, Fogazzaro strove to make this inner attitude ever more intimately his own, to detach himself from the world of images and appearances, to draw ever closer to unchanging reality. In the very depths of his being he felt indeed

“. . . something that is new, a beginning, a slow growing,
. . . a Living Being, strong over Death, a Germ.”

His one aim now was to free this “entangled future” from the many obstacles that encompassed it; as a great *Dolorosa* (St. Theresa ?) has said, to tear away the weeds, that the way may be free. In his presence one was subtly aware of his preparation for the long journey into the Unknown which had always exercised a strong fascination over him.

He was assisted in this work of purification by the bodily pain that had begun to torture him about the time *Leila* was published. Liver attacks, probably rendered more severe by recent mental suffering, became more and more frequent, obliging him to lead what was practically the life of an invalid. The trouble which had first made itself felt in the autumn, rapidly assumed proportions calculated to alarm his family. When I saw him about Christmas-time, at San Bastiano, I was immediately convinced of the gravity of the malady that was consuming his poor body, from which he had so often prayed to be set free. His face was paler and thinner than ever, and was very deeply lined. His eyes, that had sunk still deeper into their sockets, had that look of pained and suffering gravity that is as the shadow of the darkness which is descending upon the weary spirit. This,

I remember, was the last time I saw him up. He was in his library, seated with his back to a window that looked out on the dead reaches and fading hornbeams of the Valmarana garden, and through which fell the golden light of the plains of Venetia kissed by the pale winter sun. Against this background of dead nature and clear skies his body looked more ethereal, more diaphanous than ever, and it seemed to me also that his gestures had become more deliberate and weary.

But while his body was becoming ever more enfeebled, his spirit in its greater freedom was already soaring towards the realm of peace. During those last months one felt that his soul was bathed in the light of serenity, of tenderness and of strength which one seemed to see shining within him as one sees the light of a lamp shining through alabaster. His strong will had carried him safely through the storm of unrest, and he now looked down upon the world of his passions from the lofty summit it had cost him much fatigue to reach. Not a bitter word against those who had wounded him passed his lips in those days. If the talk was of his work and of his critics he would speak of them with perfect composure, with unfeigned tolerance and a desire for exculpation that was not hypocritical. To him who had dealt him a blow he secretly returned good for evil ; nor had he lost his delightful sense of humour. Between spasms of pain the waters of fun would well up from the fresh depths of his spirit. Never an impatient word, never a complaint did he utter to those around him, and never did he fail in any little act of kindness to those at a distance. He knew how to suffer as Donna Fedele had suffered, with that secret heroism that scorns high-sounding expression. He was determined to make pain, which he had ever exalted in his writings, his food of life, the fire of his purification.

Towards the end of February the attacks of pain had become so frequent as to make an operation advisable. He was then obliged to leave his home for the Vicenza City Hospital. He was too well aware of the gravity of the impending operation not to doubt whether he would ever see his villa in the suburb of San Bastiano again. Certainly his secret leave-taking of his dear " Valley of Silence," of the lovely sun-kissed terraces and of

the cypress that watches over all, must have been that of one who is departing never to return. But no one could guess what was transpiring in the very depths of his being. His main purpose was to practise a loving deception upon her who was to accompany him, a modern Antigone—his daughter.

In the little room at the hospital his life seemed to be centring evermore closely within itself. He had brought many books with him—friends old and new—and some volumes the pages of which were still uncut. In the course of the first few days he read several of these with feverish eagerness, and he also re-read several of Dickens' works with intense pleasure. But he soon tired of secular reading and begged that the books be removed. He would keep only the *Bible*, *The Imitation of Christ* and the *Divine Comedy*. Henceforth he would listen only to the few mighty voices that re-echo through all eternity. Little by little he was detaching himself from all unavailing companionship and from all that to him who realizes that he is rapidly approaching the great silence, becomes dwarfed and vain. He would grant but a few minutes even to his closest friends, and at these times he appeared already far away and absent from this world of ours.

On the eve of the operation Monsignor Bonomelli arrived. His own illness had not deterred him from coming to his friend with words of comfort. The invalid was quick to grasp the significance of this unexpected visit. When I saw him he said, with tears in his eyes: "The Angel of the Lord is coming! One day you must say that my *modernism* consisted only in this: that it was my heart's desire to see great intellects overflowing with truth and great hearts overflowing with charity raised to high places in the Church, that the world might be flooded with the light of Christianity." He spoke these words in the tone of one who entrusts a sacred heritage to the keeping of a friend.

I saw him again for a brief instant that same evening. He was smiling placidly. He was at peace with God. He pointed to a book that lay beside his pillow. "I have been reading the closing cantos of the *Paradiso*," he said, with a gesture accompanied by a look which conveyed an ineffable sense of the celestial beauty he had glimpsed. I love to recall his kind face, so pallid, so drawn, so absolutely colourless, and his eyes that shone with

the light of an almost childish joy evoked by the beauty of fast approaching eternity. That look and the gesture that accompanied it and made its meaning clear, are my last memory of him in life.

Between the 4th of March—the day on which the operation was performed—and the 6th, his heart grew steadily weaker. In the early dawn of the following day it became apparent that the end was near. A Franciscan friar was summoned who asked the dying man if he desired the last Sacrament. Fogazzaro was fully conscious and replied in the affirmative. But life ebbed rapidly during the interval that elapsed before the arrival of the Viaticum, and the friar was but just in time to administer Extreme Unction. With lips already blanched by death, with his last breath, Fogazzaro said *Amen* to the prayers of the Church. And those who stood around him knew that he had fallen asleep *in lumine Vitæ*.

The years have passed and it has been my lot to see him die again, as it were ; to behold with my own eyes, and by the sinister light that illumined a new Europe, the downfall of the world that was most truly his, the world of his art, of his dreams, of his heart.

It was during the offensive of May 1916, and the Austrians were very near Arsiero. I was the bearer of an order to a brigade whose command had their quarters in the villa at Velo—the villa of Daniele Cortis. The agonizing consciousness of the danger that threatened my country filled my thoughts as I journeyed upwards along the roads that lead down into the bright and verdant plain, at this time thronged with a population in flight. I had passed in the midst of a black stream of human beings, of carts, of bellowing cattle ; a stream of intense, desolate, defiant sorrow. At Velo the sudden tragedy-laden solitude, the crackling of machine-guns at the foot of the valley, beyond the “ *Villino delle Rose*,” the first rents in walls and trees, that strange odour of crumbling masonry, of human flesh, of leather, a few stretchers being borne along stealthily in the shelter of walls—all this suddenly revealed the fact that the firing line was near at hand. In the house of Daniele Cortis there was no one left. The com-

mand had been moved farther forward. The wind alone rushing down with the rivers from the two valleys and bringing with it the dry, metallic click of rifle firing, tore through the empty house, banging the doors and windows of the spacious, lonely rooms. Going out on to a balcony overlooking the park I caught a glimpse of the bizarre roof of *La Montanina* among the peaceful chestnut trees. For an instant it seemed to me—the solitary spectator, the only being who remembered—that I was witnessing, as in a dream, the closing episodes of that life upon which death was placing a second seal. This was the downfall of Fogazzaro's world. Not only the houses—those he had vitalized with the dreams of his youth, but the spiritual world of his romanticism, of his faith that placed its trust in progress and science, of his all-embracing human love of beauty, of wisdom whereof each race has its allotted heritage, of his Christianity that was not vague humanitarianism but true charity and brotherly love—this world also was vanishing before my very eyes in that dark hour. It was no time for meditation; but with the same rapidity with which my eye grasped every detail of the landscape, my mind asked itself whether something of the life and labours I had studied, would not survive in the new world.

It is only to-day, now that the tempest is past, that, looking back, I again find myself in the presence of that doubt and seek to answer my own question. Certainly everything that in Fogazzaro was destined to perish is dead and, like the *Montanina*, is already disappearing beneath the ivy and the silent growths of oblivion. But to my amazement I perceive that there is a side of him that is of the present, that still speaks to the spirits of men, still moves them, makes them shed tears and consoles them. There are figures that stand out strongly against the background of his work and vibrate with human reality, and whose names are on the lips of Italians as those of well-known, well-loved beings, cherished by all. Other writers have become prominent; others have attempted by every means to win public esteem, and have made of novel-writing an easy and lucrative trade. But as yet no one can boast of having surpassed Fogazzaro in weaving the spell of suggestive fascination

he knew so well how to cast over the hearts of his readers (and this not by any appeal to morbid curiosity and the lower instincts), or can maintain that he is superior to Fogazzaro in his capacity for creating human types, not according to the flesh but to the spirit. Therefore, despite the criticism, just and unjust, to which he was subjected ; despite the times and happenings ; despite, above all else, the innumerable works of fiction that have appeared since his death—there are many new editions of his works to prove that the best element among our readers still turns to Fogazzaro with a devotion that is continuous and not infrequently nostalgic. Even in this present world, which is no longer his, neither Elena nor Luisa show any signs of fading into oblivion, and this is because he still lives in the order of certain fundamental sentiments. I can only hope that this book of mine will have served to point out to younger readers the true origin of his secret, the examples he sets and the teachings he is still capable of imparting as a writer.

I would not seek to induce them to copy him, however. Neither the matter of his spiritual experience nor the form in which he sought to make it intelligible to others would bear repetition. He never possessed either the outward perfection or the inner peace of the true teacher. The never-ending, latent crisis of his life must not be reproduced. Neither *Daniele Cortis* nor *The Saint* can be used to found a school of literature upon.

Nevertheless, in the art of composing fiction Fogazzaro may still prove a safe guide even to such as turn to fiction with other sentiments, other æsthetic conceptions. In the first place, to all who seek it, he freely reveals the secret of the vitality with which his characters are endowed—and this is the honesty with which he has studied his own soul. To make others weep, he himself has had to shed tears ; to make others smile, he himself has had to laugh. It was not by roaming far afield that he discovered his most novel plots and most convincingly human accents, but by living to the full his own modest, upright life of retirement within the narrow surroundings of a provincial town ; by stern concentration within the circle even of the most commonplace existence, in order to discover the fundamental motives, to listen to the highest, truest language of the soul, to dig down

to the hidden sources of poetry which—like the living waters under the earth—is ever to be found at the core of all things.

Another lesson to be learned from Fogazzaro by those who have the gift of understanding, is that the writing of fiction should be regarded as a *vocation* and a *mission*. It is this most lofty consciousness of his duty as an artist that enhances the grandeur of his figure as a writer and, as it recedes from us, clothes it in a light which is as that encompassing the performance of a sacred rite. He is one of the few who have lived in their art as in a holy temple ; who have felt the obligation to be pure and the importance, in a literary career, of the purity and goodness of the whole life. He is one of the very few to realize the terrible responsibility he assumes who creates images and gives expression to his thoughts in words ; who have regarded poetry as a sacrament and the book as an altar. By reason of all this, therefore, he is still a living example and, to certain consciences, may indeed prove an initiator.

Not in art only, but also as a believer, Fogazzaro has an experience to transmit to us. The controversy that darkened his closing years, blurred and dimmed the clear outline of his religious personality. For reasons of discretion his name was left in certain shadowy, silent places, as the tombs of those whose doctrines gave rise to discussion or suffered condemnation are left in the discreet penumbra of certain temples, at the base of massive marble pilasters, or in remote chapels where the eye of the faithful will not easily discover them. But to-day, after an interval of time, now that enmity is appeased, now that we have scrutinized his life in its every phase, in what was of the flesh and what of the heart ; now that we have collected all documents bearing upon that period of bodily and spiritual anguish, we have the right to hope that the religious heritage he has left may come to be justly appreciated. As his biographer, the writer has conscientiously abstained from any commendation of his modernism, nor would he now seek to arouse any unconditional admiration for it. Above all, he does not wish to inspire that admiration which leads to imitation (as he has already declared in connection with Fogazzaro's art). His modernism was a crisis of thought and sentiment—a crisis that was never resolved—that was full

of torment and of doubt. No man can impart to others the true meaning of a religious crisis, for the secret tragedy of a consciencee is never repeated.

There is in the modernism of Antonio Fogazzaro much that has been passed over, that has been outlived, or brought to a conclusion, much that is now become lifeless and useless and belongs to history.

But there is an element in him that defies transient and polemical classifications in their narrowest sense. He did indeed participate in the modernist movement, but modernism has no stronger claim upon him than has Jansenism upon Manzoni. Both in different degrees and ways and at different periods in their lives had leanings towards what was lateral and reactionary (which might be either a means or a way), but both gravitated, nevertheless, towards the sempiternal centre. "I love the modern, but I prefer the eternal," Fogazzaro once wrote, and the words reveal most clearly the fundamental trend of his religious spirit. All that is most original, most vital, most enduring in him was derived precisely from the furrow ploughed by the great traditions of Italian Catholicism, from the regal current flowing from our poets and saints. The modernist is dead and may perhaps be forgotten, but in the history of Italy's spiritual development one of the few *Christians* of our era deserves a place. At a time of practical scepticism and of renascent paganism in manners, art and politics; during a period of dulness, superficiality and indifference in matters of religion, Fogazzaro stands out as one of the rare representative men who felt religion not only as a problem, but as a *passion*. Among the millions of baptized Christians he was one of the few to whom the words of Christ were a source of torment. His belief in them was steadfast and implicit; he made them the centre of his inner life; he sought in them the principle of regeneration and the fire of purification, and throughout his life was ever conscious of them, gnawing and leavening within him like germs. To him Christianity was a daily recurring tragedy, the invisible battling of the will to remain staunch to the evangelical principle, accepted not niggardly and with a part alone, but with the whole being; a battling to reach that true reform which is the result of the

inner purification of each individual ; to discover true unity, to be free and safe.

By virtue of this his tragic Christianity, which is what he himself calls "the eternal," Antonio Fogazzaro has outlived in the Church both polemics and controversy, which are but as fronds that fade ; and although, perhaps, misunderstood, he still dominates loftily as the last of the greatest Catholics of his century.



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